# BACKTRACK

## DELUXE EDITION

JOINES / ELPHICK / GARBARK

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WRITTEN AND CREATED BY:
**BRIAN JOINES**

ILLUSTRATED BY:
**JAKE ELPHICK**

COLORED BY:
**DOUG GARBARK**

LETTERED BY:
**JIM CAMPBELL**

COVER BY:
**MARCO D'ALFONSO**

ORIGINAL SERIES DESIGNED BY:

MIKE REDDY

ORIGINAL SERIES EDITED BY:

JASMINE AMIRI

DELUXE EDITION DESIGNED BY:

WINSTON GAMBRO

DELUXE EDITION EDITED BY:

GABRIEL GRANILLO

**HUNTER GORINSON**, *PRESIDENT & PUBLISHER*
**SIERRA HAHN**, *EDITOR IN CHIEF*
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# CHAPTER

NOW...

COME ON...

...Kind of.

...COME ON!

GO, GODDAMMIT, GO!

HOLY SH--

AAAAHH!

"LEVY."

LEVY!

FOUR DAYS EARLIER...

...Sort of.

IT'S *MORNING.*

YOU GOTTA GO.

C'MON, MURRAY. LET ME *STAY.*

I HAVEN'T EVEN FINISHED MY--

GREAT, NOW I GOTTA CLEAN *THAT* UP.

WHO'RE YOU KIDDING? EVERYBODY *KNOWS* YOU DON'T CLEA--

Y-YEAH, OKAY.

I'LL *GO.*

GREAT.

EVICTION

THE LUCKY PUB

THE LUCKY PUB

THE LUCKY PUB

SO...

...PRODUCTIVE DAY?

WHA--?

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO BE?

NO, NOT PRODUCTIVE. BUT ***TYPICAL,*** FROM WHAT I UNDERSTAND.

TRAGIC, REALLY. ALYSON LEVY, ONE OF THE GREATEST ***WHEELMEN*** TO OUTRUN THE LAW, REDUCED TO THIS.

SO, WHAT? THIS ABOUT A ***JOB?***

I'M ***DONE*** WITH THAT, SO HOW ABOUT YOU JUST--

I'M PARTICULARLY FOND OF THE DIAMOND HEIST, WHEN YOU GAVE THE SLIP TO HALF OF MANHATTAN'S FINEST DURING RUSH HOUR.

BUT I SUPPOSE THOSE DAYS ARE ***OVER.***

HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT? ***NOBODY*** KNOWS ABOUT THAT!

NO WAY YOU'RE A COP IN THAT CLOWN OUTFIT. SO, WHO THE HELL ***ARE*** YOU?

JUST A FAN. ONE WITH SOME ***QUESTIONS*** I'D LIKE TO ASK.

WHAT ***HAPPENED,*** MS. LEVY? WHAT TOOK YOU FROM VIBRANT, EDGY RENEGADE TO WALLOWING IN THE JUICES OF YOUR OWN MISERY?

AND MORE IMPORTANTLY... WHAT IF YOU HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE IT ALL ***GO AWAY?***

***UNDO*** THE DAMAGE THAT WAS DONE, SO THAT IT NEVER HAPPENED?

THEN I'D TELL YOU TO START ***WALKING.*** BECAUSE WHERE I'M AT...

...THERE'S ***NO*** COMING BACK.

THAT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE THINKING TOO *LINEARLY.*

MY NAME IS CASPER QUELLEX AND WHAT I HAVE TO SAY MAY SEEM IMPOSSIBLE, BUT BELIEVE ME WHEN I TELL YOU IT IS *NOT.*

WHAT I'M PROPOSING IS *TABULA RASA*--A COSMIC REBOOT TO YOUR LIFE--AND ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS EMBRACE THE SKILLS YOU ALREADY POSSESS.

*A RACE.* YOU AGAINST THE BEST DRIVERS IN THE WORLD.

YOU WIN, THEN WHATEVER HAPPENED, WHATEVER OCCURRED, WILL BE *REVERSED.* WHAT YOU SEEK... RICHES, REDEMPTION, SOMETHING ELSE...

...IT WILL BE *YOURS.*

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

I SAY IT'S AMAZING YOU'RE NOT *CHOKING* ON WHAT YOU'RE COUGHING UP.

GET OUT OF MY FACE-- GET OUT OF THIS *BAR*--WHILE YOU'RE STILL ABLE TO.

FORTUNATELY, YOURS IS A *COMMON* REACTION.

CHECK YOUR PHONE.

WHY WOULD I--

*One new video message.*

WHAT?

HEY, *ALYDEXTEROUS!*

*IT'S TOO BAD YOU CAN'T BE HERE WITH ME...*

...I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU LOVE AN ADVENTURE.

I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE I'M IN FREAKING **ASIA!** AFTER ALL THOSE YEARS OF US ON THE STREETS, PULLING JOBS, LIVING HAND TO MOUTH...

...IT'S LIKE A DREAM COME **TRUE.**

OKAY, GOTTA RUN! TALK SOON!

WHAT-- HOW--

WHAT IS THIS?!

SOME KIND OF SICK **JOKE?!**

IT'S NO JOKE!

IT ***HAS*** TO BE!

WHY? BECAUSE YOU ***THINK*** YOU KNOW THE WAY THINGS WORK?

THAT VIDEO IS AN ACCURATE PORTRAYAL OF YOUR FUTURE, GIVEN THE PROPER CIRCUMSTANCES.

TH-YOU CAN TOTALLY ***FAKE*** SOMETHING LIKE THIS! COMPUTERS, CGI--

BUT WHY DO THAT WHEN I CAN PROVIDE THE ***GENUINE ARTICLE?***

THINK OF THE INFLECTION OF HIS VOICE, THE LIGHT REFLECTING IN HIS EYES. THE CHARMING *"ALYDEXTEROUS"* NOM DE GUERRE KNOWN TO A ***VERY*** SELECT FEW.

YOU *KNOW* IT'S REAL.

I MUST BE LOSING MY MIND. IT *CAN'T--*

YOU DID SOMETHING TO ME. SPIKED MY DRINK, DID *SOME-THING.*

MS. LEVY, YOU CAN BLAME ME FOR YOUR LIMITED PERCEPTION OF THE WORLD AND ALLOW THIS CHANCE TO PASS YOU BY, OR YOU CAN RISK THE IDEA THAT THERE'S SOMETHING *MORE.*

THE CHOICE IS *YOURS.*

QUALIFYING RUNS ARE TOMORROW, ONE O'CLOCK AT REYNOLDS AIRFIELD, JUST NORTH OF THE CITY. I HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE...

...UNLESS, OF COURSE, ALL OF *THIS* FULFILLS YOUR NEEDS.

*WAIT!* I JUST-- WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?

AND WHY A *RACE?*

I'M A PROPONENT OF *SECOND CHANCES,* BUT THEY SHOULDN'T COME EASY. GOOD DEEDS ARE LITTLE MORE THAN HOLIDAY WRAP...ALL PRESENTATION, NO CONTENT.

TRUE ABSOLUTION COMES FROM SWEAT, BLOOD... *SACRIFICE.* AND THAT'S WHERE THE RACE COMES IN.

IF YOU POSSESS THE METTLE TO WIN, THEN I'VE *NO DOUBT* YOU DESERVE THE POWER TO SET THINGS RIGHT.

DO YOU?

*HEY, ALYDEXTEROUS!*

*IT'S TOO BAD YOU CAN'T BE HERE WITH ME...*

I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE I'M IN FREAKING ASIA!

AFTER ALL THOSE YEARS OF US PULLING JOBS, RUNNING AROUND THE STREETS, LIVING HAND TO MOUTH...

...I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU LOVE AN ADVENTURE.

...IT'S LIKE A DREAM COME TRUE.

OKAY, GOTTA RUN!

TALK SOON!

PLEASE...

...BE REAL.

THE RESULTS OF THE LATEST RACE ARE IN...

...TAGGART AND PEHECHAAN QUALIFY!

HELL YEAH, I DO!

BUT WE DIDN'T ***NEED*** TO WIN, MISS! WE JUST HAD TO QUALIFY!

IF YOU'RE NOT DRIVING TO WIN EVERY TIME YOU'RE IN THAT CAR, THEN I'LL FIND SOMEONE WHO ***IS.***

WILL THE FOLLOWING RACERS REPORT TO THE STARTING LINE=

GAEVEL, SHINOBI, MAGNUSENN, PIERCE, LEVY, AND DEWATT.

HEY, GIRL. YOU UP RIGHT NOW?

LOOKS LIKE WE'RE IN THE SAME ***HEAT.***

MAYBE WE COULD KEEP THAT UP ***AFTER*** THE RACE.

YEAH, ***HARD PASS,*** JACKASS...

"I'VE ALREADY **GOT** A MISTAKE I WANNA WIPE OUT."

**RACERS, START YOUR ENGINES!**

LEVY, MAGNUSENN, AND GAEVEL QUALIFY!

ALL UNQUALIFIED APPLICANTS, COLLECT YOUR BELONGINGS AND LEAVE THE FIELD ***IMMEDIATELY.***

WELL, MS. LEVY...

...WHEN I DEPARTED LAST EVENING I WASN'T SURE YOU'D BE MAKING IT TODAY.

I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT ALL THIS IS, BUT IF THERE'S EVEN A ***CHANCE*** YOU'RE ON THE LEVEL...

BESIDES, IF IT TURNS OUT YOU ***ARE*** LYING...

...I WANNA MAKE SURE I'M HERE TO FEED YOU YOUR ***TEETH.***

***HEH.*** YOU HAVE YET TO DISAPPOINT ME, MS. LEVY.

I EXPECT ***GREAT*** THINGS FROM YOU.

IN TWO DAYS, WE'LL MEET AGAIN AT THIS LOCATION, AT WHICH TIME YOU'LL EMBARK UPON AN ***EXTRAORDINARY*** JOURNEY!

USE THE EXTRA HOURS WISELY. CONNECT WITH YOUR LOVED ONES, GET PLENTY OF REST, AND PREPARE FOR ***ANY*** IMAGINABLE OBSTACLE YOU THINK YOU MIGHT ENCOUNTER!

RACERS! YOUR ATTENTION, PLEASE!

I MUST CONGRATULATE YOU! YOUR PRESENCE HERE IS A ***TRUE*** TESTAMENT TO YOUR SKILL!

BELIEVE ME...

"...YOU'LL BE *GRATEFUL* YOU DID."

SO, YOU *QUALIFIED?*

HOTEL

OF *COURSE* I QUALIFIED! THAT WAS NEVER IN DOUBT!

BUT, QUELLEX--THE THINGS HE *SAID* TO ME--

*FORGET* ABOUT QUELLEX!

THE *CAR.* DID YOU PUT THE--?

*FORGET* ABOUT HIM?!

HE KNEW *EVERYTHING!* EVERY LITTLE THING I'D DONE.

HE SHOWED ME A VIDEO. ALL THE *WOMEN...*

...THEY WERE *ALIVE.*

JUST RELAX, ISAK. WE'LL DEAL WITH THE SITUATION ONCE WE'RE DONE.

NOW, DID YOU LEAVE THE CAR WHERE WE AGREED? AND ARE THE HELMET AND SUIT--

YES, THE CAR'S *FINE.* OUTFIT'S IN THE TRUNK.

SO, HOW SHOULD WE--!!

BANG

WE'RE DONE.

RACERS...

...IT'S TIME TO ***BEGIN!***

YOUR OBJECTIVE IS SIMPLE: FROM THIS STARTING POINT, SIMPLY DRIVE TO THE PARKING AREA OF ***DODGER STADIUM.***

WHOEVER ARRIVES FIRST WILL FIND THEIR LIFE ***FOREVER*** CHANGED.

WAIT...

...THAT'S ONLY ***THIRTY MILES!***

THIS THING YOU PROMISE IS DETERMINED BY WHO WINS ***THAT?***

I UNDERSTAND YOUR ***CONFUSION,*** BUT DON'T WORRY...

...YOU'LL BE TAKING THE ***LONG*** WAY AROUND.

NOW...

***"READY..."***

***"...SET..."***

OKAY, C'MON. C'MON, GIRL.

YOU *GOT* THIS.

YOU GOT--

WHA-- WHAT THE *HELL?!*

NONONONONONONONO GODDAMMIT *NO!*

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU--

--DOING?

I--
I--

WHAT--
HOW IS
THIS--

WHERE
IS THE
AIRFIELD?

SCREW
THE AIRFIELD.
WHERE'S THE
***ROAD?***

WHATEVER
HAS HAPPENED, IT
SEEMS THE MAN WITH
THE ***HELMET*** IS
UNBOTHERED
BY IT.

I WONDER IF
HE MIGHT--

THIS--

THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE.

OH, PLEASE! THEY EXPECT US TO BUY THIS?

THAT DUDE WAS PROBABLY SOME KINDA ACTOR...

...AND THIS IS JUST SOME KINDA THEME PARK CRAP TO THROW US OFF OUR--

MRRAAAAAHHH

MRRAAAAAAAAAHHH

AHH!

COME ON...

...COME ON!

GO, GODDAMMIT, GO!

HURRY, IT'S COMING!

I'M GOING AS FAST AS I CAN!

DAVID!

AGGLLLRK--!

OKAY! OKAY. THINK.

THINK THINKTHINK THINKTHINK.

WE WERE AT THE AIRFIELD. THERE WAS A FLASH AND NOW WE'RE IN A JUNGLE WITH THAT--

JESUS, THIS IS INSANE.

THERE HAS TO BE SOME--

AH!

-HWUAH-

-HWUAH-

COME ON...COME ON, PLEASE--

VODKA

DAMMIT.

DAMMIT!

HOLY--!

AAAIIIGGHH!

WHAT THE HELL IS HAPPENING?!

WAIT.

THE RIDGE--

IT--

IT'S A MAP.

WHA--?

WOW.

SHE'S *HERE!*

LEVY, RIGHT?

WE WEREN'T SURE IF YOU WERE GOING TO MAKE IT!

YEAH, THAT'S *TWO* OF US.

WHAT IS THIS PLACE? AND HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?

WHO *CARES?!*

WE'RE ALL GOING TO *DIE* HERE!

DON'T LISTEN TO HIM. SOME OF US AREN'T *ADJUSTING* AS WELL AS OTHERS.

I KNOW YOU'RE LEVY BECAUSE YOU'RE THE LAST TO ARRIVE. OR AT LEAST...

1 MAGNUSSENN
2 HUIQING
3 JACKSON
4 PIETROWSKI
5 TAGGART
6 DEHECHAAN
7 ROA
8 DOE
9 FILKE
10 LEVY
X GAEVEL
X BEAUREGARD
X KAKKAR

...THE LAST WHO *CAN* STILL ARRIVE.

SO, IT'S KEEPING TRACK OF US? HOW WE PLACED, WHO *DIED?*

WHO ARE THE--

BEAUREGARD WAS THE OLD MAN. I TALKED TO HIM DURING QUALIFIERS.

HE AND HIS *GRANDSON* WERE GOING TO DRIVE IN SHIFTS.

THE BIG GUY MUST'VE BEEN KAKKAR. THAT *THING* GOT HIM RIGHT AFTER WE ARRIVED.

I'M NOT SURE ABOUT GAEVEL. I THINK HE WAS THE ONE ON THE MOTOR--

*SSSHH!*

WHAT DID YOU--

I SAID BE *QUIET!*

YOU'LL SCARE THEM *OFF.*

LADY, I DON'T THINK *ANYTHING'S* SCARING THOSE THINGS AWAY.

JUST ASK *GAEVEL.*

OKAY, WE NEED TO ORGANIZE. COME UP WITH SOME KIND OF *PLAN.*

IT LOOKS LIKE THAT FIELD'S *PROTECTING* US, SO LET'S--

NO, WE NEED SOME GODDAMN *ANSWERS!* QUELLEX TOLD ME THIS WAS A RACE. POINT A, POINT B, DONE!

HE DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT FRIGGING *DINOSAURS* OR WHATEVER THIS THING WAS!

SHE'S RIGHT!

EVERYBODY WHO'S GONNA MAKE IT HERE HAS! SO IS THAT IT? DID SOMEBODY *WIN?*

IS THIS SOME KIND OF SCI-FI *FINISH LINE?*

WE HAVEN'T EVEN *STARTED.*

THIS IS JUST A *CHECKPOINT.* THE FIRST RESTING AREA BEFORE WE START THE NEXT LEG.

QUELLEX DOESN'T CARE ABOUT YOUR PROBLEMS. ALL HE CARES ABOUT'S THE *GAME...*

...AND GETTING YOU TO *PLAY.*

NOW HE'S GOING TO BOUNCE YOU LOT UP AND DOWN THE ***TIMELINE,*** CHIPPING AWAY UNTIL WHATEVER MANGLED PIECE OF MEAT REMAINING PULLS ITSELF ACROSS THE FINISH LINE.

BUT, HEY, THAT'S ***ENTERTAINMENT.***

YEAH? AND HOW DO YOU KNOW ***THAT?***

SIMPLE...

...BECAUSE I'VE DONE IT ALL BEFORE.

CHAPTER

2

SEVEN MONTHS AGO...

...Kind of.

DAMMIT.

Stopwatch

13:43:07

...BEEN A BIG MISUNDERSTANDING HERE.

HOW ABOUT WE *FORGET* ALL OF THIS...

...AND JUST GO *HOME*.

NOW...

...Sort of.

HOW'RE WE GONNA GET HOME?

WHAT DO YOU *MEAN,* YOU'VE DONE THIS BEFORE?

HOW'S *ANY* OF THIS POSSIBLE?

*TIME TRAVEL?* ARE YOU *KIDDING* ME?

YOU CAN *UNDO* IT, RIGHT?

YOU TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON OR I'M GONNA *BREAK* YOUR--

*THAT'S ENOUGH!*

I'M NOT RESPONSIBLE, I DON'T CONTROL THIS, AND I ***CANNOT*** RETURN YOU TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY!

NOW, EVERYBODY, ***BACK OFF*** BEFORE I--

*HE'S QUITE CORRECT.*

*THE ONLY THING MR. MOIRAI HAS DONE IS SOMEHOW GET HIMSELF INTO THE RACE, YET **AGAIN.***

*BUT THIS ISN'T ABOUT HIM, IT'S ABOUT ALL OF **YOU.***

***CONGRATULATIONS** ON SURVIVING YOUR FIRST LEG OF THE RACE! YOU ALL SERVE AS A TESTAMENT TO YOUR TALENTS BEHIND THE WHEEL!*

*NOW, I'M SURE YOU MAY HAVE QUEST--*

ARE YOU FOR ***REAL?!*** YEAH, I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS!

WHAT DID YOU ***DO*** TO US? WHAT IS THIS PLACE?

*AS MR. MOIRAI TOLD YOU, I'M FROM A PERIOD IN YOUR **FUTURE** WHERE TIME TRAVEL TECHNOLOGY HAS BEEN CREATED. TECHNOLOGY I USED TO OUTFIT YOUR CARS WITH THE NECESSARY DEVICES.*

*I ALSO FORTIFIED THEM TO HANDLE WHATEVER ROUGH TERRAIN YOU MIGHT ENCOUNTER, SUCH AS THE **CRETACEOUS PERIOD** OUTSIDE.*

*I'M SURE YOU NOTICED THE GIANT LIZARDS **EATING** YOUR FELLOW DRIVERS.*

THAT MAKES NO SENSE. IF THERE IS TIME TRAVEL IN THE FUTURE, THEN WHY HAVEN'T WE BEEN ***INUNDATED*** WITH VISITORS FROM THAT TIME AND BEYOND?

AND WHY A ***RACE?*** WHY NOT JUST PULL A CLICHÉ AND KILL ***HITLER?***

THAT'S STILL A ***THING,*** RIGHT? KILLING HITLER?

*ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS ARE TEMPORAL DYNAMICS 101, LITTLE MORE THAN A TIME TRAVELING **END USER** AGREEMENT.*

*YOU SHOULD BE FOCUSING ON--*

I ONLY HAVE ***ONE*** QUESTION ABOUT ANY OF THIS.

WHAT YOU PROMISED ME... WHAT I GET IF I ***WIN.***

IS IT ***LEGIT*** OR JUST A TRICK TO GET ME HERE?

VERY GOOD, MS. LEVY. FOCUS ON THE "WHAT" RATHER THAN THE "***HOW.***"

***YES,*** THE PROMISE STANDS. THE WINNER SHALL BE GIVEN A CHANCE TO GO BACK ALONG YOUR TIMELINE AND CORRECT ONE MISTAKE YOU MADE.

AND HAVING SEEN ***PROOF*** OF MY ABILITIES, YOU NOW KNOW THAT IT'S POSSIBLE.

YEAH, BUT A WINNER MEANS THERE'RE ***LOSERS,*** TOO.

WHAT HAPPENS TO ***THEM?***

IT DOESN'T MATTER...

...BECAUSE IT'S NOT ***GETTING*** THAT FAR.

QUELLEX, MY FATHER IS WORTH THIRTY-FOUR BILLION DOLLARS. YOU LET ME ***WIN*** RIGHT NOW, SEND ME HOME...

...AND I'LL MAKE YOU A VERY RICH MAN.

WELL, AREN'T YOU JUST ***ADORABLE.***

I WON'T INSULT YOUR INTELLIGENCE, ***MS. PEHECHAAN,*** WITH A LECTURE ON CROSS-CENTURY ***EXCHANGE RATES.***

AND TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION, ***MR. TAGGART,*** THOSE WHO ***SURVIVE*** THE RACE, YET STILL COME UP SHORT, WILL BE ALLOWED TO RESUME YOUR LIVES...

*...SUCH AS THEY ARE.*

NOW, I RECOMMEND PLENTY OF ***REST.*** YOUR NEXT LEG IS JUST A FEW HOURS AWAY...

...AND YOU'RE GOING TO NEED IT.

AMAZING...

OH GOD, WE'RE IN HELL. WE'RE IN HELL!

I'M GONNA BE SICK...

COME ON... PLEASE...

I CAN'T GET A SIGNAL!

ALL RIGHT, MAYBE YOU DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING, BUT I'M BETTING YOU KNOW MORE THAN QUELLEX IS TELLING US.

TALK.

IT'LL BE MUCH EASIER TO TALK WITHOUT YOUR ARM ON MY THROAT, MISS--?

WYNN. WYNN DOMINA.

LEMMON MOIRAI. AND WHAT I KNOW'S JUST A FEW THINGS I'VE PICKED UP HERE AND THERE.

LIKE THAT THIS ENTIRE RACE IS ILLEGAL. TIME TRAVEL'S OUTLAWED IN QUELLEX'S TIME.

AND HE'S DOING IT ALL FOR PROFIT. THE FUTURE IDLE-ELITE PAY GOOD MONEY TO WATCH WE IGNORANT SAVAGE-TYPES KILL OURSELVES FOR FUN.

THAT'S WHY HE TARGETS PEOPLE LIKE THIS GROUP: BROKEN, HELPLESS, WITH NOTHING TO LOSE AND EVERY-THING TO GAIN.

WHERE'RE YOU GOING?

AWAY FROM ALL OF...THIS. ALL OF YOU.

I NEED SOME AIR.

RRRAAIII

JESUS!

NOTHING MATTERS. NOTHING MATTERS AT *ALL*--

THAT'S RIGHT, JUST KEEP TAKING DEEP BREATHS. WE'LL FIND A WAY OUT OF THIS.

I DON'T KNOW *HOW*, BUT--

DOESN'T HE KNOW WHO I *AM*?

WHAT I COULD *DO* FOR HIM IF HE JUST LET ME WIN?

I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE SEEING THE FULL PICTURE, MS. PEHECHAAN...

YOU KNOW ALL OF THIS, SO WHY THE HELL WOULD YOU *INTENTIONALLY* PUT YOURSELF IN THE RACE, AGAIN AND AGAIN?

YOU HAVE SOME KIND OF *DEATH WISH*?

THAT'S A *PRIVATE* MATTER.

YOU HAVE YOUR REASONS FOR DOING THIS, RIGHT? SOME HORRIFIC EVENT YOU'D RISK YOUR LIFE TO CHANGE?

THAT SHOULD BE ANSWER *ENOUGH*.

NOW, IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'M GOING TO DO THE ONE THING QUELLEX SAID I *KNOW* IS TRUE...

"...AND GET SOME SLEEP."

IT'S **BEAUTIFUL,** ISN'T IT?

YEAH, IN A "PARK IS OFFLINE AND WE'RE ALL GONNA DIE" KINDA WAY.

I'M **DEVIN.**

**CAO HUIQING.**

THINK ABOUT IT, DEVIN. THE WORLD WE'RE LOOKING AT IS PURE, UNBLEMISHED BY HUMANITY. IT'S AN ENGINE RUNNING ON PERFECT NATURAL **INSTINCT.**

I WONDER IF WE CHOSE TO STAY, WOULD WE BE ADAM AND EVES, GIVING RISE TO MANKIND?

OR WOULD WE BE THE CLOG IN THE ENGINE THAT **DESTROYS** IT ALL?

ARE YOU CRAZY? WHY THE HELL WOULD WE **STAY?**

YOU WANNA PULL A FLINTSTONE, BE MY GUEST.

GEEZ, THOSE TWO HAVE GONE FULL **ANIMAL PLANET.**

YOU'RE **DALE TAGGART,** RIGHT? MY OLD MAN WAS SUPER INTO **NASCAR.**

*EH,* GUILTY AS CHARGED...

...THOUGH EVERY DAY I'VE GOTTA **REMIND** MYSELF A BIT MORE OF THAT.

SO, WAS YOUR DAD A **FAN,** *UH--*

**RAMONA.** *OH* YEAH, HE THOUGHT YOU WERE **GREAT...**

...UNTIL, YOU KNOW, ALL THE STUFF WITH THE BOOZE AND THE **DRUGS.**

AND WHEN YOU RACED FULLY LOADED...MAN, YOU THREW IT **ALL** AWAY!

IS THAT WHY YOU'RE **HERE?**

Y'KNOW WHAT, RAMONA?

SOMETHING TELLS ME YOU ALREADY **GOT** YOUR DAMN ANSWER.

THAT'S A 2009, RIGHT? I'VE HEARD MOST PEOPLE PREFER THE '08s.

LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE MADE SOME ***MODIFICATIONS,*** THOUGH.

IT'S NOT ***MY*** MODIFICATIONS I'M WORRIED ABOUT.

I DON'T LIKE THE IDEA OF QUELLEX SCREWING WITH ITS INSIDES.

I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. CAR SHOULD BE A ***HOLY TEMPLE,*** AND I FEEL LIKE MINE'S BEEN DESECRATED.

THINGS WERE PRETTY-- WELL, THEY'RE ***STILL*** INSANE, BUT I DIDN'T GET TO INTRODUCE MYSELF WHEN YOU GOT HERE. ***CHARLES JACKSON.***

AND YOU'RE LEVY, RIGHT?

YEP.

WELL, LEVY, I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT OUR SITUATION AND I THINK WE STAND A CHANCE OF SURVIVING ALL THIS IF WE WORK ***TOGETHER.***

IF QUELLEX IS ON THE LEVEL, AND WE'RE GOING TO BE BOUNCING AROUND TO GOD KNOWS WHERE, WE NEED TO FORGET THE RACE AND--

NOT INTERESTED.

BUT--

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR ANGLE IS, BUT I'M ONLY DOING THIS TO ***WIN.***

AND IF THAT MEANS BUSTING UP YOUR *"TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK"* MOVEMENT, THEN THE HELL WITH ***ALL*** OF YOU.

*HEH.*

WHAT, *"HEH"*?

WE ***MUST*** BE IN A TIME MACHINE BECAUSE I FEEL LIKE I'M LOOKING AT MY OLD SELF. WALLS UP, MOUTH SHUT, FRONTING LIKE YOU'RE THE BADDEST ONE IN HERE--

YOU'RE IN THE ***LIFE,*** AREN'T YOU?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "THE LIFE"?

YOU *KNOW* WHAT I MEAN. LIVING ON THE OUTSIDE, DOING WHAT YOU WANT, WHEN YOU WANT, WITHOUT KOWTOWING TO ANY LAW.

YOU'RE THE *CRIMINAL ELEMENT.*

AND THAT'S *YOU?*

NOW IT'S *MY* TURN TO "HEH".

IN MY TIME I WAS BOOSTING CARS AND WORKING CHOP-SHOPS. PEOPLE *KNEW* MY NAME.

BUT IT BREAKS YOU DOWN. EVENTUALLY, YOU GO DOWN OR GROW UP, AND I CHOSE THE *LATTER...*

...BECAUSE OF *THEM.*

MY WIFE KAYLA AND OUR BOY, TYLER.

THEY KEEP ME GROUNDED, NO MATTER WHAT GOES DOWN. AND THEY'RE WHY I'M DOING THIS.

WITHOUT THEM--

YOU'D BE A MIDDLE-AGED DEGENERATE NOBODY.

--IF YOU WEREN'T ALREADY *DEAD.*

FORGIVE MY EAVESDROPPING, IT WAS NOT MY *INTENT.*

BUT YOU STILL CHIMED IN *ANYWAY,* DIDN'T YOU, MISTER--?

*INSPECTOR ERON ABAROA.* AND I ONLY WISH TO *CORROBORATE* YOUR COMMENTS ABOUT THE CRIMINAL LIFESTYLE.

I'VE SEEN, FIRSTHAND, THE *TOLL* IT CAN TAKE ON SOMEONE'S--

*DRIVERS...*

...THE NEXT LEG WILL BE STARTING IN FIVE MINUTES. PLEASE PROCEED TO YOUR VEHICLES.

AN INTERESTING MIX, ISN'T IT?

CROOKS, THIEVES, DISGRACED DRIVERS, A BILLIONAIRE HEIRESS...

...AND OUR *MAN OF MYSTERY.*

GOOD MORNING!

EVERYONE FEEL *REFRESHED?*

YEAH? AND WHAT ABOUT *YOU?*

WHAT'S A *COP* DOING HANGING AROUND WITH ALL US DEGENERATES?

JUST A VARIATION OF THE TALE YOU TOLD THE GIRL, MY FRIEND.

SOME MEN ARE WISE AND EXTRACT THEMSELVES FROM MORAL *DECAY.*

SOME ARE *NOT.*

*READY...*

*SET...*

OKAY...

NO MONSTERS *YET*...

OH, **HELL**, YEAH!

FINALLY, A ***REAL*** ROAD TO WORK WITH!

GO ***FASTER!*** WE NEED TO GET AHEAD OF THEM!

I AM ***NOT*** GOING TO LOSE AGAIN!

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, MS. PEHECHAAN, THAT LITTLE ***LIGHT DISPLAY*** HASN'T POPPED UP YET.

WITHOUT IT, WE GOT NO CLUE WHERE WE'RE ***ACTUALLY***...

...GOING.

OH, MY--

WHOA.

DAMN.

GOTCHA.

ΕΙΣΒΟΛΕΙΣ! ΤΕΡΑ!

ΣΠΗΑΙΝΩ ΣΥΝΑΥΕΡΗΌ!

THAT'S RIGHT, INSPECTOR...

...GO AHEAD AND TAKE THE LEAD.

JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE--

NOW.

WHA--?

WHAT IS HE *DOING*?

MOVE!
MOVE!

HA-

WORKS
EVERY
TIME.

HEY!

WHAT THE
HELL--?

YEAH!

SORRY, PAL.
BUT NO WAY
I'M COMING
IN--

--LAAAOOOOOAACCCKK!

OH, GOD.

I'M GONNA--

NO. DEEP BREATHS, LIKE THE GUY SAID.

FOCUS ON THE RACE, FOCUS ON THE RACE, FOCUS ON...

ON...

...FOCUS ON GETTING RICH.

WHERE ARE YOU TAKING US?

THERE'S NOBODY AROUND!

THAT'S THE POINT. NOBODY AROUND, NOBODY TO BLOCK OUR PATH.

THOUGH I'M SURPRISED WE HAVEN'T MET MORE RESISTANCE COMING THROUGH.

MORE RESISTANCE?

YOU SAW WHAT THOSE SOLDIERS DID TO THAT CAR!

RIGHT, BUT A PLACE THIS SIZE? THEY SHOULD HAVE WHOLE GARRISONS OF TROOPS ON US.

ESPECIALLY IF THOSE WATCH-TOWERS WE PASSED WARNED THEM.

NOBODY CARES ABOUT YOUR STUPID ANALYSIS! JUST DRIVE!

IF WE'RE BEHIND BECAUSE OF THIS, I--EW.

SO...

...I KNOW WHERE SOME OF THE SOLDIERS ARE.

OH, CHRIST.

I WONDER WHAT--?

WELL DON'T PULL OVER TO WATCH IT!

GO!

-HUFF-

-HUFF-

CASI TERMINO...

AAGH!

BASTARDO!

BASTARDO!

ΕΔΏ ΠΈΡΑ!

MERDA.

DAMMIT!

GET OUT OF THE GODDAMN WAY!

OH, COME ON!

SWEAR TO *GOD*, I'M STARTING TO MISS THE...

...DINOSAURS.

ΕΤΟΙΗΆΣΟΥ...

ΠΡΟΣΈΞΤΕ!

HAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

I-I'M--

WHAT WAS *THAT*?

WHERE'D *SHE* COME FROM?!

DO *NOT* LET HER GET AHEAD OF US!

ON IT.

COME ON...

NO... *NO...*

SHE'S--

WHAT WAS THAT?

WHAT THE *HELL* WAS THAT?!

I WAS IN THE LEAD!

WHO ARE YOU TO JUST SHOW UP AND *STEAL* IT FROM ME?

WHO CARES? NEITHER OF US *WON* ANYTHING.

WHY ARE YOU THROWING A FIT OVER *FIFTH PLACE*?

*OH* MY GOD, YOU'RE ONE OF *THOSE* PEOPLE AREN'T YOU?

YOUR LIFE'S SO SAD, YOU HAVE TO KNOCK SOMEONE LIKE ME DOWN TO FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOURSELF.

IT'S *PATHETIC.*

*WHOOP!* SORRY, MISS, BUT I CAN'T ALLOW YOU TO DO THAT.

MISS PEHECHAAN, MAYBE YOU COULD GO *FRESHEN UP* AFTER THE LONG DAY?

*WHATEVER.*

I'M *DONE* WITH THIS ONE, ANYWAY.

YOU BETTER KEEP *SUPER SWEET SIXTEEN* THERE ON A TIGHTER LEASH.

WAY THINGS ARE GOING, YOU MIGHT NOT BE *AROUND* THE NEXT TIME SHE MOUTHS OFF.

ARE YOU ALL--

*JESUS!* YOU, TOO?

JUST LEAVE ME *ALONE,* ALL RIGHT?

WELL, WE'RE JUST ONE BIG *HAPPY* FAMILY, AREN'T WE?

SPEAKING OF, LOOKS LIKE THE ASIAN LADY AND THE NERVOUS KID MADE IT.

YES...

8 HUIQING
... ABAROA
X PIETROWSKI
X GAEVEL
X BEAUREGARD
X KAKKAR
1 TAGGART
2 MOIRAI
3 DOMINA
4 JACKSON
5 LEVY
6 PEHECHAAN
7 FILKE

...LOOKS LIKE ONLY *ABAROA* IS UNACCOUNTED FOR.

*OH*, AND WE LOST THE PIETROWSKI GIRL...RAMONA.

NOT A *BIG* LOSS, YOU ASK ME.

BUT THAT STUNT YOU PULLED ON ABAROA...IF HE DOESN'T COME *BACK*--

YOU KNOW YOU DO WHAT YOU *HAVE* TO. I'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE, AND TRUST ME...

...YOU DO *NOT* WANT TO BE FIRST THROUGH THOSE GATES.

AND YOU JUST KEPT ON NOT BEING FIRST 'CAUSE I KICKED YOUR *ASS* CROSSING THE LINE TODAY!

YES, CONGRATULATIONS, TAGGART. YOU'RE A *TRUE* AMERICAN HERO.

*AH*, SEE? ABAROA MADE IT BACK JUST FINE.

YEAH, AND HE LOOKS LIKE HE BROUGHT THE WHOLE DAMN ARMY FROM CONSTABT-- CONTANTI--

*WHAT'D* YOU SAY THIS PLACE WAS, AGAIN?

*CONSTANTINOPLE.*

GOOD THING WE GOT THAT *SHIELD* THING TO KEEP THEM ALL OUT.

IT *WILL* KEEP THEM OUT, RIGHT?

OF *COURSE*, IT WILL! I HAVEN'T EVER SEEN ANY--

*MOIRAI.*

YOU LEFT ME OUT THERE TO *DIE.*

LET'S SEE IF YOU ENJOY IT AS MUCH AS I DID.

# CHAPTER

# 3

ONE YEAR AGO...

...Kind of.

YOU LEVY?

JIMMY FERDUGO TOLD ME WHERE TO FIND YOU.

SAYS YOU'RE A *DRIVER.*

JIMMY FERDUGO SAYS A *LOT* OF THINGS. MOST OF THEM NOT TRUE.

HE SAYS YOU'RE THE *BEST.*

ALTHOUGH, HE DOES GET IT *RIGHT* EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I GOT A *JOB.* HIGH-END PRODUCT, TOTALLY UNTRACEABLE, BIG PAYOUT.

THERE'S GONNA BE LOTS OF PROTECTION, SO WHEN WE GO, IT'S GOTTA BE *FAST.*

FAST IS MY *THING.*

I TAKE TWENTY PERCENT OF THE CUT AND DON'T EVEN *TOUCH* A GUN OR I'M GONE.

YEAH, YEAH. SURE, WHATEVER. JUST SO LONG AS YOU'RE *IN.*

ONE THING: IT'S A BIG OPERATION. LOTSA PLANNING, AND I'M GONNA NEED A CREW I CAN RELY ON.

RIGHT NOW, I'M *DOWN* A GUY.

YOU KNOW ANYONE?

NOW...
...Sort of.

STAY DOWN!

I'LL GIVE IT TO YOU, MOIRA!... IT'S BEEN *YEARS* SINCE ANYONE'S GOTTEN THE BETTER OF ME AS YOU DID.

I HOPE THAT BRINGS YOU *SOLACE* AT THE END.

NOW JUST *WAIT* A MINUTE--!

IT WASN'T PERSONAL, IT WAS ***STRATEGY.***

THE ONLY THING I'M TRYING TO DO IS ***WIN.***

BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY, CORRECT? EVEN AT THE COST OF OUR ***LIVES.***

IF YOU'RE ***NOT*** THINKING THAT WAY, ALL YOU'RE DOING HERE IS TAKING A SUNDAY DRIVE AROUND JOLLY OLD CONSTANTINOPLE.

BESIDES, I HARDLY THINK YOU'RE ONE TO TALK ABOUT THE ***SANCTITY*** OF LIFE.

YOU ***ARE*** THREATENING TO PUT A BULLET IN MY BRAIN, AFTER ALL.

AND YOU WOULDN'T SUBJECT YOURSELF TO THIS IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE SOMETHING PARTICULARLY INSIDIOUS TO CLEAN UP.

MY... HAND?

I'M SORRY YOU HURT YOUR HAND, BUT GET OFF YOUR HIGH HORSE AND STOP BLUBBERING.

INSPECTOR... ***ERON...***

I GET THAT YOU'RE ***ANGRY.*** I WOULD BE, TOO. BUT--

***STAY BACK!***

I'VE BEEN TRICKED. I'VE BEEN BITTEN. I'VE BEEN ***HUMILIATED*** BY THIS MAN AND I WILL--

WAIT, YOU SAID YOU WERE ***BITTEN?***

BY WHAT?

***ENOUGH*** OF THIS...

***BANG***

WHA--

WHAT *IS* THIS?

IT'S *SIMPLE...*

...QUELLEX DOESN'T MUCH LIKE IT WHEN CONTESTANTS OFF EACH OTHER IN-BETWEEN THE RACES.

SO, HE HAS A FEW SAFEGUARDS IN PLACE TO MAKE SURE IT DOESN'T HAPPEN.

BUT, I *SHOT* YOU!

THIS ISN'T *POSSIBLE!*

AND YET, YESTERDAY YOU OUTRAN A *TYRANNOSAURUS REX.*

NOW, I'LL REPEAT MY QUESTION...

...*WHAT* BIT YOU?

WHEN THE SOLDIERS ATTACKED MY CAR, A WHEEL WAS PUNCTURED. I WENT TO CHANGE IT AND WAS BITTEN BY A RAT.

IT'S *NOTHING.*

AND RATS ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR CLEANLINESS, AREN'T THEY?

YOU NEED TO GET IT THROUGH YOUR HEAD THAT TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY NOTHINGS MIGHT STILL BE ALIVE AND KICKING RIGHT NOW.

OKAY, WE KNOW WHERE WE ARE, BUT I NEED TO KNOW EXACTLY *WHEN* WE ARE. DOES ANYONE REMEMBER ANYTHING THAT STOOD OUT?

A BUILDING, CLOTHING, ARTWORK... NOTHING IS TOO SMALL TO MENTION!

YES...

I SAW THAT ONE-- DEVIN--TAKING JEWLERY FROM SOME OF THE LOCALS.

THAT'S A *LIE!* I DIDN'T TAKE ANY--

HEY, GET AWAY FROM MY *CAR!*

***RELAX.*** YOU THINK YOU'RE THE FIRST DRIVER WHO TRIED FLEECING AN ANTIQUE ON THE SIDE?

LET'S SEE WHAT WE'VE--

WELL...

...THAT'S A ***BOLD*** CHOICE.

I HAVE NO IDEA HOW THAT GOT THERE! SOMEBODY MUST'VE--

YOU CAN STOP TALKING NOW.

THIS IS JUSTINIAN, EMPEROR OF BYZANTINE. IF THIS IS CURRENT, THAT PUTS US SOMEWHERE IN THE 500 ADs.

BUT, THAT STILL DOESN'T--

I GOT SOMETHING.

MS. PEHECHAAN AND I FOUND A PART OF THE CITY THAT WAS DESERTED, SAVE FOR A FEW SOLDIERS.

THEY WERE MOVING BODIES... ***HUNDREDS*** OF THEM.

IT WAS A MASS GRAVE.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

IT MEANS IN 541, RATS SPREAD A ***PLAGUE*** THAT WIPED OUT FIFTY MILLION PEOPLE. AND BASED ON YOUR FEVERISH APPEARANCE AND WILD RANTINGS...

...I'M GUESSING YOU'RE ONE OF THEM.

JESUS!

EVERYBODY CALM DOWN!

THESE CHECKPOINTS MANIPULATE *TIME!* IT'S WHY THE BULLET DIDN'T HIT ME, OR WHY YOU NEVER HAVE TO REFUEL YOUR CARS!

AS LONG AS WE'RE IN THE CHECKPOINT, WE WON'T CONTRACT THE DISEASE!

THE HELL WITH *THAT!*

MAN, ARE YOU *CRAZY?* YOU CAN'T GO OUT THERE!

THE *SOLDIERS--*

I'D RATHER CHANCE THEM THAN JUST STAY HERE AND *DIE!*

I GET YOU'RE SCARED, BUT I THINK WE CAN TRUST MOIRAI.

HE'S DONE ALL THIS BEFORE AND--

ARE YOU SERIOUS? HE'S THE *REASON* WE GOTTA DEAL WITH--

BANG

YOU SAY THIS PLACE MANIPULATES TIME.

SO, STAYING HERE WILL *HEAL* ME.

I'M *DEAD.*

I SUPPOSE YOU *REALLY* WANT TO SHOOT ME, NOW.

I DO. BUT AFTER ALL I'VE SEEN AND HEARD...

YOU CONTRACTED THE PLAGUE *OUTSIDE* THE CHECK-POINT.

THE EFFECTS MAY BE SLOWED, BUT ULTIMATELY--

"...WHAT'S THE POINT?"

IT'S TOO BAD YOU CAN'T BE HERE WITH ME.

I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU LIKE AN ADVENTURE.

OH, HEY! YOU! WAIT!

IT'S CAO, RIGHT?

YES, AND YOU'RE LEVY.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

JUST TO SAY THANKS FOR DRIVING INTO THOSE GUARDS OUT THERE.

THEY HAD ME DEAD. IF YOU HADN'T--

WERE YOU *THERE*? I DIDN'T REALIZE.

THEN, WHY WOULD YOU EVEN *DO* THAT?

I DON'T KNOW...

PROBABLY FOR *FUN.*

OOOOKAY--

SHE IS AN ODD ONE.

HMMM?

DO YOU MIND IF I JOIN YOU?

ACCORDING TO OUR GOOD FRIEND MOIRAI, IT'S SAFE.

OH. I-- UH--

YEAH, SURE. I GUESS.

I'VE NOTICED YOU STARING AT THAT PHONE A GREAT DEAL.

DOES IT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH WHY YOU'RE HERE?

WHAT DO YOU ***WANT,*** INSPECTOR?

JUST TO CONTINUE OUR PREVIOUS CONVERSATION.

IN MY LIFE, MS. LEVY, I'VE DONE MANY THINGS...MOST OF THEM NOT VERY GOOD. YOU SAW HOW EASILY I PULLED THE TRIGGER ON MOIRAI.

I LOOK AT YOU AND I SEE MYSELF, BEFORE THE CARTEL TOOK AHOLD OF ME. FEELING THERE'S NO COMING BACK, THAT YOUR DARKEST ACTS WILL ALWAYS DEFINE YOU.

IT'S NONSENSE.

YOU HAVE THE CHOICE TO LEAVE THAT DARKNESS BEHIND, YOU JUST NEED TO ***MAKE*** IT.

I'M GETTING SICK OF HEARING ABOUT HOW I REMIND EVERYONE OF THEIR ***YOUNGER SELVES.***

WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS?

I SUPPOSE THE LAST FEW HOURS HAVE ME QUESTIONING WHAT I'M LEAVING BEHIND.

I ORIGINALLY CAME HERE TO UNDO THE CHOICES I MADE, BUT AS IT APPEARS I WON'T SEE A FINISH LINE...

...PERHAPS PREVENTING THOSE CHOICES IN ***OTHERS*** IS THE ONLY SALVATION I HAVE.

DRIVERS...

...THE NEXT LEG WILL BE STARTING IN FIVE MINUTES. PLEASE PROCEED TO YOUR VEHICLES.

AAAAHH!

SON OF A BITCH!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

GET IN YOUR CAR!

I'M GOING TO JUST STAY HERE.

I'M DONE WITH ALL OF THIS.

LOOK, DO WHAT YOU WANT. STAY, GO, DOESN'T MATTER TO ME.

MAYBE YOU GET STRANDED, MAYBE YOU CEASE TO EXIST...***NOT*** MY PROBLEM.

BUT, IF IT WAS ME, AND I KNEW I MIGHT BE ABLE TO GO BACK IN TIME TO ***BEAT*** MOIRAI AT HIS OWN GAME...

...THERE'S NOT A PLAGUE IN THE WORLD THAT'D PREVENT ME FROM AT LEAST ***TRYING.***

YOU...

...MAKE A ***VERY*** COMPELLING ARGUMENT.

OKAY... *PEACEFUL.* NICE AND QUIET.

*THAT'LL* LAST.

GET CLOSER TO THE *FRONT.*

MS. PEHECHAAN, I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF WE'RE GOING IN THE RIGHT *DIRECTION.*

THE *MAP* HASN'T--

*"...I WANT TO BE THERE **FIRST.**"*

*OH,* NO--

I SAID GET *CLOSER!* WHEREVER WE'RE GOING...

WHAT THE HELL--?

ARE YOU GUYS SEEING THIS?

THE MAP SAYS THE CHECKPOINT'S JUST OVER THAT RIDGE!

I KNOW!

CLOSE AS I CAN FIGURE, IT'S A TEN MINUTE DRIVE!

OKAY, SO WHAT'S WITH THE CLOCK?

IT STARTED AT THIRTY MINUTES AND--

看!

走開!你是做什麼的?

遠離我們你的怪物!

OKAY...

...APPARENTLY WE'RE FREAKING OUT THE NICE PEOPLE WITH OUR MAGICAL CARTS FROM THE FUTURE.

WE CAN'T WORRY ABOUT THAT RIGHT NOW. THAT CLOCK IS COUNTING DOWN.

GOD ONLY KNOWS TO *WHAT.*

WELL, HELL, I'VE GOT AN IDEA...

...WHY DON'T WE JUST ASK MISTER ALL-KNOWING ***TIME TRAVELER*** HERE WHAT'S GOING ON?

HOW 'BOUT IT, MOIRAI? WHAT'S THE SCARY CLOCK COUNTING DOWN TO?

I HONESTLY HAVE ***NO*** IDEA. QUELLEX HASN'T USED THIS IN ANY OF THE RACES I'VE RUN.

THAT FAMILY IS SPEAKING CHINESE, SO IF WE CAN DETERMINE--

CHINESE? GREAT! MAYBE WE CAN ASK THE NATIVES WHAT'S ABOUT T'HAPPEN.

YOU WANNA TAKE A SHOT AT IT?

WHAT, I'M FROM THE COUNTRY AND SPEAK THE LANGUAGE JUST BECAUSE I ***LOOK*** THE PART?

***THAT*** MAKES SENSE.

OF COURSE NOT! ***NONE*** OF THIS MAKES SENSE! YOU'RE RELYING ON THE WORD OF A GUY WHO'D GET US KILLED AND NOT EVEN BLINK!

THE SAME GUY WHO WOUND UP EXPOSING US TO ***THAT!***

I WATCHED MY MAMA WITHER UP INTO ***NOTHING*** FROM SOME DISEASE SHE COULDN'T BEAT.

NO ***WAY*** I'M LETTING THAT HAPPEN TO ME.

TAGGART--!

YOU WANNA WASTE TIME TALKING ALL THIS OUT WITH YOUR HEADS UP YOUR ASSES, BE MY GUEST. BUT ALL THIS SMELLS LIKE ANOTHER ***TRICK*** T'ME.

THE ***REAL*** ROUTE'S PROBABLY BACK THE OTHER WAY!

MY DADDY ALWAYS TOLD ME IF YOU AIN'T ***MOVING,*** YOU'RE ***DYING.***

AND MY MOVING DAYS AREN'T DONE, YET.

YOU THINK HE'S RIGHT?

HE IS ABOUT ONE THING...

...WE *ARE* WASTING TIME.

I'VE GOT SOME EQUIPMENT THAT MIGHT BUDGE THE TREE ENOUGH FOR A CAR TO GET THROUGH, IF WE WORK TOGETHER ON IT.

THAT'S THE BEST I CAN THINK OF, BEYOND JUST FOLLOWING DALE.

BUT WILL WE HAVE TIME TO DO ALL OF THAT AND STILL REACH THE CHECKPOINT?

NO IDEA. BUT I'D RATHER GAMBLE ON A *KNOWN* TEN MINUTES THAN AN UNKNOWN DETOUR.

WHATEVER. BUT YOU'RE NOT USING *MY* CAR.

I'M NOT GOING TO *DAMAGE* IT AND RUIN OUR CHANCES FOR WINNING.

COLOR ME *SHOCKED.*

IF SHE DOESN'T LIKE IT, I'M *IN.* WHAT DO YOU NEED?

LET'S SEE WHAT EVERYONE HAS. I'M GUESSING IT'LL TAKE THREE OR FOUR CARS, AT *LEAST,* DEPENDING ON WHAT EVERYONE'S CARRYING.

EVERYONE GET BACK TO YOUR CARS AND CHECK YOUR GEAR!

MOIRAI, GO LOOP INSPECTOR ABAROA IN. WE'LL NEED--

WHAT IN--?

WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?

YOU! THIS PLACE! WHAT *IS* IT?

HEIBEI? YUNNAN? SHANGDONG?

GANSU? SHAANXI? NING--

SHAANXI! *SHAANXI!*

DAMMIT.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

*OH*, JUST THE 1556 SHAANXI EARTHQUAKE. MILLIONS DEAD, COMPLETE DEVASTATION.

WE'RE *STANDING* IN IT.

YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT WE'RE COUNTING DOWN TO? WE'RE COUNTING DOWN TO *THAT.*

WE NEED TO *MOVE.*

WHOA!

T P

14:25

RIDE'S GETTING BUMPY.

GUESS THOSE UPGRADES THEY INSTALLED AREN'T AS GOOD AS THEY SAID.

25:40

JUST ANOTHER DAMN TRIC--

ATTENTION DRIVER.

DEVIATION FROM RECOMMENDED COURSE NOTED.

SHUTTING DOWN.

WHAT?! NO!

I GOTTA GET TO THE--

MAYBE... MAYBE THEY WERE--

NO. HELL, NO.

KEEP MOVING.

KEEP GOING! GIVE IT EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT!

THAT'S IT, WYNN! YOU'RE GETTING THERE!

COMING UP ON SIXTEEN MINUTES!

HEY...

...ARE YOU SERIOUSLY *STEALING* FROM THAT FAMILY?

THEY DON'T *HAVE* ANYTHING!

DON'T BE *STUPID!* I'M NOT TRYING TO--

*SAVE* IT! I CLOCKED YOUR ASS BACK IN LA.

YOU SHOULD BE *HELPING* ME, NOT TRYING TO STOP ME!

BESIDES, IF MOIRAI'S RIGHT, THIS FAMILY'S NOT GONNA HAVE MUCH USE FOR *ANYTHING* IN ANOTHER FEW MINUTES.

YOU'RE JUST A PENNY-ANTE CONMAN THAT DOESN'T CARE WHO THEY RIP OFF, AS LONG AS YOU BENEFIT.

YEAH? AND WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE?

ALYSON LEVY, THE WOMAN WHO'LL DRIVE *ANY* JOB IF THE PRICE IS RIGHT?

PUT IT BACK. *ALL* OF IT.

I SEE *ONE* THING OF THEIRS IN YOUR CAR, I'LL KICK YOUR ASS FROM HERE TO...

...OH.

UM, HI.

我可以向村里的朋友們展示這個嗎？

UH-HUH. *SURE.*

I HAVE *NO* IDEA WHAT YOU'RE SAYING TO ME.

這輛馬車太神奇了！

聳牛去哪兒了？

OKAY, BUDDY, COME ON. WE'VE GOTTA GET YOU BACK TO YOUR...

...FAMILY.

WELL...

I WOULD *NOT* BELIEVE THIS IF I HADN'T SEEN IT WITH MY OWN EYES.

THIS RACE REALLY *IS* A MIRACLE.

*OH*, GO F--

*CHARLES?!*

CHARLES, WE DID IT! WE'RE *THROUGH!*

I'M GOING TO UNHOOK THE CARS...

...START SENDING THE OTHERS THROUGH!

COPY THAT, WYNN!

EVERYONE... *MOVE OUT!*

I THINK HE *LIKES* YOU.

AND IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SWEAR HE WAS MAKING YOU HAPPY.

YEAH, WELL...

...HE REMINDS ME OF SOMEBODY.

YEAH...

ME, TOO.

LOOK... CHARLES, RIGHT? WE HEARD WHAT MOIRAI SAID. WE KNOW WHAT'S *COMING.*

HOW CAN WE JUST--

LEVY, COME ON...

...WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE.

BUT--BUT, THERE HAS TO BE SOMETHING WE CAN--

THE *FAMILY.* WE CAN'T JUST--

KID! KID!

COME ON, WE'VE GOT TO *GO!*

*COME ON!*

YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND ME! I'M TRYING TO *SAVE* YOU!

母親! 母親!

GODDAMMIT, *PLEASE!* YOU HAVE TO--

LEVY! STOP IT!

YOU'RE *SCARING* HIM!

I KNOW IT'S HARD, BUT GIVE HIM WHAT LITTLE COMFORT HE HAS LEFT.

WHEN HIS TIME COMES, IT SHOULDN'T BE WITH *STRANGERS.*

I--

I'M SORRY.

NONONONONO...

DON'T *DO* THIS TO ME!

HEH.

SORRY, ***PENNY-ANTE.*** LOOKS LIKE YOU GET WHAT YOU...

...DESERVE.

DAMMIT.

PLEASE COME OFF, PLEASE COME--

PLEASE DON'T LET ME *DIE* IN ANCIENT CHINA!

HEY!

GET IN!

WHAT?!

GET IN OR DON'T. IT'S *YOUR* ASS AND I DON'T CARE.

*LAST* CHANCE.

05:38

AHHH!

*OH* MY GOD, *OH* MY--YOU *SAVED* ME!

IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, *ANYTHING* AT ALL, I WILL TOTALLY--

SHUT UP.

I DIDN'T DO IT FOR *YOU.*

C'MON...

COME ON, BABY, DON'T LET ME DOWN...

CONNECTION WITH CHECKPOINT REESTABLISHED.

LOADING REVISED COURSE.

HAH!

YOU'RE GODDAMN RIGHT IT HAS!

LOOKS LIKE I'M BACK IN THE--

W-WHAT?

WHAT THE HELL'S--?

AAAAHHH!

IT OUGHTA BE AROUND HERE SOMEWH--

LOOK!

0:00:33

THERE IT IS!

HOW'RE WE ON TIME?

NOT GREAT.

0:00:10

C'MON, HURRY UP!

WE'RE NOT GOING TO MAKE IT!

SHUT THE HELL UP AND LET ME DRIVE!

WE'RE--

# CHAPTER

# 4

ELEVEN MONTHS AGO...

...Kind of.

EEEEEEE OOOOOOOOH EEEEEEEE OOOOOOOOH EEEE

EEEEE O

DAMMIT!

ALYSON? WHAT THE HELL'RE YOU--

NO.

EEEE OOOOOOH

EEEEEEE OOOOOOOOH EEEE

IT'S A GOOD SCORE. *LOTS* OF MONEY ON THE TABLE.

NO.

WHY DO WE EVEN *DO* THIS DANCE?

YOU *KNOW* YOU CAN'T SAY NO TO ME.

FOR THE *LAST TIME*--

NOW...

...Sort of.

NO!

AAAAAAA--!

WHA--

WHAT HAPPENED?

I-I THINK WE GOT THROWN *INTO* THE CHECKPOINT.

I THINK IT *STOPPED* US.

OH MY GOD!

DEEP BREATHS... DEEP, DEEP BREATHS...

YOU OKAY, LEVY?

I-- WHERE'S--

MOIRA!

HOW--?

HMM? OH, IT'S LIKE I WAS SAYING ABOUT THE BULLETS.

NO MATTER HOW YOU ARRIVE, ONCE YOU'RE INSIDE THE TIME MANIPULATION--

NO...ALL OF THIS.

HOW MUCH MORE OF THIS IS QUELLEX GOING TO PUT US THROUGH?

AS MUCH AS HE WANTS TO. THESE RACES RUN PURELY ON HIS WHIM.

JUST BE GRATEFUL YOU SURVIVED...

...NOT EVERYONE DID.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | PEHECHAAN | 8 | FILKE |
| 2 | ABAROA | X | TAGGART |
| 3 | MOIRAI | X | PIETROWSKI |
| 4 | HUIQING | X | GAEVEL |
| 5 | DOMINA | X | BEAUREGARD |
| 6 | JACKSON | X | KAKKAR |
| 7 | LEVY | | |

I KNOW PEOPLE DIED OUT THERE!

I DON'T NEED YOU TELLING ME WHAT I SHOULD--

SSSSHH!

I'M TRYING TO APPRECIATE THIS.

IT'S ACTUALLY SOOTHING IF YOU LOOK AT IT THE RIGHT--

WHAT THE HELL IS ***WRONG*** WITH YOU?!

***MILLIONS*** OF PEOPLE JUST DIED, AND YOU WALK AROUND LIKE YOU'RE GODDAMN ***SIGHT-SEEING!***

SO, WHAT?

PEOPLE ***DIE*** ALL THE TIME.

JUST BECAUSE YOU NEED TO WALLOW IN IT DOESN'T MEAN THE ***REST*** OF US HAVE TO.

THIS IS AN ADVENTURE...***ONCE IN A LIFETIME*** KIND OF STUFF. IF YOU'RE TOO CAUGHT UP IN YOURSELF TO APPRECIATE IT...

...THAT'S ***YOUR*** PROBLEM.

ME? I'M GOING TO ***ENJOY*** THE RUSH.

MS. LEVY, IT MIGHT BE BEST IF YOU GOT SOME REST.

YOU'VE CLEARLY HAD A TRAUMATIC EXPER--

YOU KNOW WHAT, PLAGUE RAT? ***SAVE*** THE ADVICE!

YOU REALLY WANT TO HELP? THEN GET YOUR GUN AND GO ***MURDER*** THAT PSYCHO BITCH.

BUT YOU CAN'T, CAN YOU? BECAUSE IT DOESN'T ***WORK*** HERE!

***NOTHING*** WORKS THE WAY IT SHOULD, HERE!

WELL...

...AT LEAST WE'RE FINALLY GETTING SOME ***ENTERTAINMENT*** IN THIS DUMP.

"...IT'S LIKE A DREAM COME TRUE."

OKAY, GOTTA RUN! TALK SOON!

SCREW IT.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE *DOING*, LEVY?

AAAH--!

ME?! WHAT THE HELL ARE *YOU* DOING?!

MAKING SURE YOU DON'T GO AND DO ANYTHING STUPID.

STOP ACTING LIKE YOU'RE SOME GODDAMN GUARDIAN ANGEL. IF I-I--

THE *KID*. HE MIGHT BE OUT THERE. HE MIGHT BE ALIVE, NO MATTER HOW SLIM--

I GET IT...

...BUT THERE'S NOT EVEN A *ROAD* ANYMORE.

HELL, THE GROUND THE ROAD WAS *ON* IS GONE.

QUELLEX MESSED WITH OUR CARS TO HANDLE ROUGH TERRAIN! I COULD--

JESUS, WHAT'M I GONNA DO? THAT LITTLE BOY--

LOOK, I *KNOW* IT'S HARD, BUT--

***NOTHING.*** YOU CAN'T DO A DAMN THING.

YOU HAVE TO JUST LET IT FESTER INSIDE OF YOU UNTIL ONE DAY, ***MAYBE,*** YOU FIND A WAY TO ***HONOR*** THAT LOSS.

IN A WAY, YOU DID THAT WHEN YOU RESCUED DEVIN.

SPEAKING OF WHICH, YOU GOT OTHER THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT.

WHAT'RE YOU--?

***DEVIN?!***

WHAT THE HELL--?!

HE PROBABLY WANTS TO MAKE SURE YOU DON'T LEAVE HIM.

YOU NEED TO WATCH HIM. HE'S STILL ON THE BOARD--

AND WON'T THINK TWICE ABOUT SCREWING ME FOR THE WIN.

I'M AWARE--

***AAAIIIIGGH!***

¡NO!

¡MANTENTE ALEJADO!

PERO EL INSPECTOR ABAROA...

...QUERÍAMOS QUE NOS DEJES SOLOS TAMBIÉN.

Y MIRANOS A NOSOTROS ABORA.

¡Y MIRANOS A NOSOTROS AHORA!

INSPECTOR?!

¿QUIEN--?

MIRA, ERON. ES LA JOVEN A LA QUE LE HAS INTERESADO TANTO.

MÁTALA, COMO HAS MATADO A MUCHOS A MIS ÓRDENES.

SÍ, DON GIMÉNEZ. PUEDES CONSIDERARLA YA MUERTA.

LEVY--?

THE BULLETS CAN'T TOUCH US, REMEMBER?

GO GET HIM SOME WATER. AND DON'T WORRY...

...I'LL BE FINE.

I SAW...VISIONS. FACES OF LIVES I'VE DESTROYED.

¿QUÉ?

¿LO QUE HA SUCEDIDO?

INSPECTOR? IT'S ME, LEV-- ***ALYSON.*** DO YOU REMEMBER?

YOU WERE SCREAMING...

AND THEN, DON GIMÉNEZ, THE HEAD OF THE CARTEL. HE INSTRUCTED ME TO KILL YOU.

YEAH, BUT AFTER THAT ***'PLAGUE RAT' CRACK,*** I CAN'T SAY I BLAME HIM.

THANK YOU, MR. JACKSON.

DON'T TROUBLE YOURSELF WITH EARLIER EVENTS, MS. LEVY...

INSPECTOR...?

...THAT'S WHAT PUT MOST OF US HERE IN THE ***FIRST*** PLACE.

NOW, IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'D LIKE TO ATTEMPT TO GET SOME REST...

"...AND PREPARE FOR WHATEVER LIES AHEAD."

WHERE ARE WE, NOW?

I DON'T KNOW, BUT DO YOU FEEL THAT? IT'S *PAVEMENT!*

AND THERE'S ELECTRICITY OUTSIDE! LIKE, CIVILIZED SOCIETY ELECTRICITY!

*UGH*...THERE'S STILL NO *SIGNAL!*

AND WHY'S EVERYTHING SO DULL AND FADED?

YOU GET THERE ARE PLACES BEYOND DUBAI AND MIAMI BEACH, RIGHT?

TAKE A LOOK AROUND...

...WE'RE IN *GERMANY.*

AND *NOT* THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY VARIETY.

WURTSHAUS

ABSATZMARKT

HA HA! *HELL,* YES!

NOW, THIS IS *MY* KINDA TIME TRAVEL!

BRKINKM

ESEN

*SEVENTIES,* BABY!

CHARLES, IT'S WYNN. THE MAP JUST SHOWED UP FOR ME. DO YOU COPY?

LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT OUR TARGET.

I SEE IT, TOO. LOOKS LIKE A STRAIGHT SHOT.

AND NO COUNTDOWN, THIS TIME. HOPE THAT'S A SIGN...

...THAT WE'RE IN FOR A ***SMOOTH RIDE.***

TELEFON

*DAS IST SCHUSTER. FREIGABEZAHL NULL-NEUN-FÜNF-DREI-SECHS-SECHS.*

*HOLEN SIE MICH KOMMADANT BUNDT.*

I THOUGHT YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE A ***GETAWAY*** DRIVER.

CAN'T THIS THING GO ***FASTER?***

IT'S GOING FASTER THAN ***YOUR*** CAR, THESE DAYS.

JUST SAY THE WORD AND I'LL DROP YOU OFF WITH ***DER KOMMISAR.***

TAKE A LEFT, HERE!

DUDE, THE MAP IS ***LITERALLY*** IN FRONT OF ME!

IS ***THIS*** WHAT IT'S GOING TO BE LIKE THE REST OF THE...

...RACE?

OH MY GOD.

WHY'D YOU STOP?

BECAUSE OF THE *WALL*, DEVIN.

BECAUSE OF THE GODDAMN *BERLIN WALL.*

YOU WANTED A GETAWAY?

JA. JAWOHL.

VERSTANDEN.

WE'RE *GONE.*

*BEWEGUNG! SCHNELL!*

*DIEN ZIEL SIND DIESE SELTSAMEN AUTOS!*

*BEREITES ZIELFEUER!*

BACK UP, BACK UP, BACK UP!

OOOOOH...

THIS IS GOING TO BE *FUN.*

WHAT'S HAPPENING?!

WE LANDED IN EAST GERMANY!

BEFORE YOUR TIME, BUT TRUST ME, IT'S THE *WRONG* SIDE OF--

I DON'T CARE! JUST GET ME *OUT* OF HERE!

WHA--?!

THOSE WEREN'T *BEHIND* US!

*OH,* VERY GOOD, CASPER...

...VERY GOOD, INDEED.

¿POR QUÉ CORRES, ERON?

TE UNIRÁS A NOSOTROS EN EL INFIERNO MUY PRONTO.

¡CÁLLATE! CÁLLATE.

¡NO TE DEJARÉ DISTRAERME!

JESUS!

WHAT, ARE YOU TRYING TO GET ME *KILLED*?!

NO, BUT I'M *CONSIDERING* IT!

NOW, HOLD ON...

OKAY... OKAY...

...AND GETAWAY *GOT.*

WHAT?!

THEY'RE *STILL* AFTER US!

YEAH, BUT THERE'S LESS OF THEM, NOW.

AND THE FEWER TAILS, THE EASIER IT IS TO...

...SHAKE THEM.

SKREEEEE

GESEN

NO, PLEASE, DON'T SHOOT! THIS ISN'T MY *FAULT!*

SHE *ABDUCTED* ME!

*SIGH...*

WELL, *THAT* DIDN'T TAKE LONG.

WYNN! YOU READ ME?

THEY GOT US! YOU HEAR ME? THE SOLDIERS HAVE US BOXED IN AND--

*KOMM DA RAUS!*

ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! I GOT IT!

JUST BE COOL!

*ALARM KOMMANDANT BUNDT.*

*WIR HABEN SIE.*

CHARLES?!

CHARLES DO YOU COPY?!

I REPEAT, DO YOU COP--

HUH?!

THIS WAY!

WHAT?!

THIS WAY! FOLLOW ME!

I KNOW A PLACE TO HOLE UP!

DON'T TELL HER THAT!

WE COULD'VE BEEN THE LAST CAR LEFT, BUT YOU GAVE IT AWAY!

MS. PEHECHAAN, I REALIZE YOU'RE USED TO A PARTICULAR LIFESTYLE, BUT IN THE REAL WORLD...

...THERE'S STRENGTH IN NUMBERS.

I *NEVER* SHOULD'VE RIDDEN WITH YOU!

ALL OF THIS? *YOUR* FAULT!

I SHOULD'VE JUST STAYED BEHIND AND RISKED THE EARTHQUAKE.

GOOD TO KNOW.

SOON AS I WIN THIS, I'M CHANGING MY PAST TO *LEAVE* YOUR ASS IN CHINA!

THAT'S ENOUGH. WE NEED TO *FOCUS.*

IF THERE'S AN OPENING, ANY CHANCE TO *ESCAPE,* WE NEED TO BE--

*HAH.*

YOU GOT SOMETHING YOU WANT TO *SAY,* MOIRAI?

I JUST REALIZED THIS IS PROBABLY YOUR FIRST GULAG. IT'S ALMOST *CHARMING,* YOUR NAIVETÉ.

LET ME TELL YOU HOW IT WORKS.

FIRST, THEY'LL ASK ABOUT OUR CARS. WHERE WE GOT THEM, WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE... THE INTERROGATOR'S GREATEST HITS.

MAYBE WE'RE HONEST, MAYBE NOT. BUT I GUARANTEE THEY WILL *NOT* LIKE THE ANSWER.

AND THAT'S WHEN THEY *REALLY* GO TO WORK.

GUTEN TAG, MY FRIENDS.

MY NAME IS KOMMADANT GERHARD BUNDT AND I WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME YOU TO THIS FACILITY.

YOU ARE AMERICANS, CORRECT?

THEY ARE. I'M A KIWI.

GO ALL BLACKS, AND ALL OF THAT.

NEW ZEALAND, EH? EXOTIC.

I'VE RECEIVED WORD YOUR ASSOCIATES HAVE DISAPPEARED. APPARENTLY, OUR SOLDIERS WERE HESITANT TO OPEN FIRE IN THE CROWDED ALEXANDERPLATZ.

AN UNFORTUNATE CHOICE ON THEIR PART.

SO, WHAT BRINGS YOU ALL TO OUR CITY?

OH, NOTHING MUCH. VISITING FRIENDS.

THEY JUST LIVE A COUPLE SOVIET BLOCS OVER.

YOU'VE CHOSEN THE RIGHT TIME TO VISIT. BERLIN IS BEAUTIFUL THIS TIME OF YEAR.

WOULDN'T YOU AGREE?

HONESTLY, I DIDN'T SEE MUCH PAST THAT UGLY-ASS WALL YOU HAVE UP.

PITY. I, MYSELF HAVE SEEN WONDROUS THINGS TODAY. YOUR VEHICLES, FOR EXAMPLE.

I RECOGNIZE THE PONTIAC, BUT THE OTHERS ARE UNLIKE ANY I'VE EVER SEEN BEFORE.

BUT, WHAT TRULY AMAZES ME...

...IS THIS.

MY PHONE?!

GIVE IT TO ME, YOU PIECE OF--

THIS IS A TELEPHONE?

NEIN, NEIN, LASS SIE GEHEN. SIE KANN MIR NICHT SCHADEN.

IT IS SO SMALL! WITH NO CORDS, OR WIRES, OR--

HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?

I DON'T KNOW, IT'S A PHONE. I DIDN'T INVENT IT, I JUST USE IT.

IF YOU GIVE IT TO ME, I CAN SHOW YOU HOW--

NO, I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT WOULD BE WISE. WE'VE NOT YET BUILT TO THAT LEVEL OF TRUST.

BUT WE COULD, IF YOU ANSWER A FEW SIMPLE QUESTIONS. ABOUT WHO YOU ARE, WHY YOU'RE REALLY HERE...

...AND ABOUT YOUR COLLEAGUES...

"...WHERE ***ARE*** THEY?"

***HOW'D*** YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS PLACE?

HAD A JOB HERE IN '98... HAD TO STASH SOME HARDWARE. PLACE WAS ***ANCIENT*** BY THEN.

SO, JACKSON SAID HE WAS CAPTURED?

THAT'S RIGHT. HE AND MOIRAI WERE FOLLOWING LEVY, LAST I SAW THEM.

SAFE TO ASSUME IF THEY GOT ONE OF THEM, THEY GOT ALL OF THEM.

GOOD! THEY'RE OUR ***COMPETITION.***

THE LESS WE HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT, THE ***BETTER.***

I'M ***ARMY,*** LITTLE GIRL.

WE DON'T LEAVE PEOPLE BEHIND.

WHATEVER. GO AHEAD AND GET YOURSELF KILLED.

AND WHILE THEY'RE ***BLOWING YOU UP,*** WE'LL HEAD FOR THE CHECKPOINT.

NOT WITH ***ME,*** YOU'RE NOT.

***WHAT?!***

I'VE DEALT WITH EX-STASI TYPES. ***NASTY*** BIT OF WORK.

OPPOSITION OR NOT, WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE THEM HERE.

YOU THINK YOU CAN RUN THIS RACE AND WIN BACK DADDY'S LOVE ALL BY YOURSELF, BE MY GUEST.

KEYS'RE RIGHT HERE.

***FINE.***

BUT WHEN ALL THIS IS DONE, YOU ARE ***SO*** FIRED.

I CAN'T IMAGINE ***YOU'D*** HAVE ANY INTEREST IN HELPING.

I'M ***NOT.*** BUT THE FACT YOU'RE EVEN CONSIDERING THIS IS TOO INSANE TO PASS UP.

COUNT ME IN.

AND ME.

I REALIZE YOU HAVE ***CONCERNS,*** BUT MR. JACKSON AND MS. LEVY SHOWED ME A GREAT KINDNESS.

NO MATTER THE COST...

"...I PLAN TO **RETURN** THE FAVOR."

MY AMUSEMENT WITH THESE GAMES IS WANING.

I WOULD **STRONGLY** ADVISE YOU ADMIT THE TRUTH: THAT YOU ARE FOREIGN AGENTS WORKING IN DIRECT OPPOSITION OF OUR GOVERNMENT.

AND THIS SO-CALLED **PHONE...**

...IS, IN FACT, AN ELABORATE **LISTENING DEVICE.**

WELL... YEAH. **ALL** PHONES ARE LISTENING DEVICES.

YOU CAN **SPEAK** INTO THEM AS WELL.

YOU DOUBT MY SINCERITY?

NOT AT ALL, THOUGH THE WHOLE THING'S A BIT CLICHÉ.

NOW, THE SPANISH INQUISITION. **THEY** KNEW HOW TO ASK A QUESTION.

AND DOES **THIS** FEEL "CLICHÉ" TO YOU?

YOU PROBABLY DON'T WANT ME ANSWERING THAT.

BESIDES, LIFE I'VE LED, YOU'D BE DOING ME A **SOLID.**

I'VE SPENT **YEARS** PURSUING SOMETHING JUST BEYOND MY REACH, DOING THINGS I NEVER THOUGHT MYSELF CAPABLE OF...THINGS I'LL CONTINUE DOING. LOCKED IN A TIMELESS CYCLE OF DEATH AND VIOLENCE...

...AND THE ONLY CONSTANT IS MY CONTINUED **FAILURE.**

SO, ANYTHING THAT GETS ME OFF THAT MERRY-GO-ROUND?

WELL, THAT'D JUST BE A **RELIEF.**

I BELIEVE THAT IS THE FIRST **HONEST** THING YOU'VE SAID TODAY.

BUT A MAN WITH NOTHING TO LOSE HAS NOTHING TO GIVE.

YOUR *COMPANIONS,* ON THE OTHER HAND--

*GREAT.*

CAN'T WAIT.

BUT, WHICH SHALL IT BE? THE WOMAN? THE TRUCULENT ONE?

NO.

THE *SQUIRMING* ONE.

WHAT? NO, PLEASE, *DON'T--*

*AAAAHHH!*

*OKAY!* OKAY! I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING!

I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DO TO THEM, JUST DON'T HURT *ME!*

DAMMIT, DEVIN, *SHUT THE HELL--*

WE'RE FROM THE *TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY.* WE ENTERED A RACE THAT'S BOUNCING US ALL OVER *TIME!*

YOU'RE JUST OUR LATEST STOP.

I KNOW HOW IT SOUNDS, BUT IT'S WHY OUR CARS AND PHONES ARE SO ADVANCED. THEY'RE FROM THE *FUTURE.*

I CAN SHOW YOU! THEY MESSED WITH OUR CARS, PUT IN THINGS TO FORCE US BACK TO FRIGGING *DINOSAUR TIMES* OR WHEREVER!

I CAN EVEN *TAKE* YOU SOMEPLACE, IF YOU JUST--

NO...

...THAT WILL *NOT* BE NECESSARY.

BANG

I TRUST I HAVE MADE MYSELF CLEAR REGARDING ANY FURTHER *LIES?*

*EXCELLENT.* NOW...

...WHO IS GOING TO BE *NEXT?*

# CHAPTER

# 5

SEVEN MONTHS AGO...

...Kind of.

DINER

...AND THEN WE'RE *GONE*, NOBODY THE WISER.

LEAST NOT 'TIL THE MORNING.

ALYDEXTEROUS, CAN I GET A WORD--?

WHAT?

YOU GOT SOME KINDA *PROBLEM* WITH THE PLAN?

NO, FRANK! NO PROBLEM AT ALL.

JUST GIVE US A SECOND.

YO, FRANK, THAT DUDE LOOKS A LITTLE *RABBITY*.

CAN WE *TRUST* HIM?

LEVY VOUCHES FOR HIM AND WE *NEED* HER, SO THAT'S ENOUGH FOR ME.

UNTIL IT *AIN'T*.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU *THINKING*, PULLING US OUT--

*SPARE* ME THE RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION CRAP, ALYSON!

THIS JOB'S A *TRASH FIRE!*

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, HOOKING UP WITH THESE GUYS, BUT *NO* PAYOUT'S WORTH--

GODDAMMIT, I WOULDN'T HAVE COME TO YOU IF THIS WAS *JUST* ANOTHER JOB!

I KNOW YOU'VE STRUGGLED TO GET AWAY FROM THIS LIFE, BUT TRUST ME...

...THIS IS THE ONE WE'VE BEEN *WAITING* FOR.

NOW...

...Kind of.

THIS WAITING HAS GROWN *TIRESOME.*

YOU WILL DISCLOSE THE REASONS BEHIND YOUR PRESENCE IN OUR COUNTRY, OR SHARE THE SAME FATE AS YOUR MORE ***PERFORATED*** COMRADE.

LEVY?

YOU--
YOU--

YOU *BASTARD!*

I'LL *KILL* YOU FOR--

PLEASE, FRÄULEIN... *COMPOSE* YOURSELF.

I HAVE NO PATIENCE FOR SUCH *HISTRIONICS.*

IT IS ODD, THOUGH--I HAD THE IMPRESSION YOU DID NOT *CARE* FOR THE RECENTLY DECEASED.

STILL, IF YOU ARE SO EAGER TO JOIN HIM, AT LEAST DO SO WITH A MODICUM OF *DIGNITY.*

*NO!*

WA--?!

*ARROGANTER DUMMKOPF!*

SUCH *INSOLENCE* SHALL BE--

*KLIK KLIK*

*HMMM.*

IT APPEARS I USED *ALL* MY BULLETS ON YOUR FRIEND.

A *TEMPORARY* REPRIEVE, BUT PERHAPS BENEFICIAL FOR INTERROGATION PURPOSES...

...AT LEAST, UNTIL WE LOCATE YOUR *ASSOCIATES.*

FOR YOUR SAKE...

"...PRAY WE HAVE NOT FOUND THEM BEFORE I RETURN."

WO SIND SIE?!

WO SIND SIE?!

WAIT, DON'T--

DAMMIT, I'M *TALKING* TO YOU, M--

WHAT *IS* YOUR DRIVER'S NAME?!

I DON'T KNOW! HE'S A *DRIVER.*

WHAT'S YOUR *VACUUM'S* NAME?

ES GIBT GERÜCHTE ÜBER EINEN INOFFIZIELLEN ORT! EINE VERLASSENE FABRIK ZEHN KILOMETER VON HIER ENTFERNT!

DIE OFFIZIERE NUTZEN ES ALS WARTEZENTRUM!

HE SAYS THERE ARE RUMORS OF AN OFF-THE-BOOKS SITE. FACTORY, ABOUT TEN KLICKS FROM HERE.

SOMEPLACE HIGHER-UPS WET THEIR BEAKS BEFORE REPORTING TO PARTY LEADERS.

IF A BUNCH OF CARS FROM THE FUTURE SUDDENLY LANDED IN MY LAP...

...THAT'S WHERE I'D STASH THEM.

GREAT! LET'S GO SHOOT THE PLACE UP AND GET *OUT* OF--

WE STILL NEED A WAY *IN.*

HAVE HIM CALL HIS *FRIENDS.*

WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU ***THINKING,*** GOING AFTER HIM LIKE THAT?!

I DON'T KNOW, THAT I DIDN'T WANT HIM ***SHOOTING*** YOU?

YOU'RE ***WELCOME,*** BY THE WAY.

YEAH, GREAT. NOW WE ***BOTH*** GET TO BE SHOT IN A COUPLE MINUTES.

WAY TO SHELTER IN THE STORM.

COME ON, LEVY, YOU CAN'T THINK THAT WAY.

AND WHY CAN'T SHE, JACKSON? WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU TRYING TO SAVE HER ***FOR?***

SO SHE CAN BE PILLAGED BY VIKINGS? SACRIFICED BY SOME AZTECS?

LETTING HER TAKE A BULLET MIGHT BE THE MOST ***HUMANE*** THING YOU COULD DO.

MOIRAI, I KNOW YOU'VE RUN THIS RACE A DOZEN TIMES BEFORE...

...BUT FOR RIGHT NOW, ***SHUT THE HELL UP.***

CHARLES...MAN, YOU NEED TO FACE FACTS: ***THIS IS IT.***

WE ARE NOT GETTING OUT OF HERE ALIVE.

I DON'T BELIEVE THAT. I ***WON'T.***

THE FACT I'M EVEN IN THIS RACE...

...TELLS ME HOPE IS NEVER OFF THE TABLE.

I GET WHAT YOU'RE FEELING, LIKE THERE'S NO WAY OUT...

...BECAUSE I FELT THE SAME WAY WHEN TYLER-- WHEN MY SON...

...WHEN HE DIED.

I TOLD YOU I USED TO RUN WITH A GANG AS A KID. BOOSTING CARS, WORKING CHOP SHOPS...I COULDN'T SEE ANY KIND OF FUTURE PAST WHAT WAS IN FRONT OF ME.

BUT I MET KAYLA AND I GOT OUT. WENT TO SCHOOL, GOT A DEGREE, STARTED MY OWN BUSINESS.

A FEW YEARS LATER, TY CAME ALONG. AND LITTLE MAN WAS ***PERFECT.***

NO MATTER WHAT TRASH I PULLED AS A KID, WHAT GUILT I WAS LUGGING AROUND, TY LET ME KNOW IT WAS ALL OKAY.

I WAS ***HAPPY.***

BUT THE BUSINESS...THE BUSINESS WAS TAKING OFF. I WAS WORKING CRAZY HOURS, SOMETIMES SLEEPING IN THE OFFICE. KAYLA WOULD COME IN TO HELP, TOO.

AND I ***MISSED*** IT.

LITTLE MAN GOT SICK...***LEUKEMIA.*** AND BY THE TIME WE CAUGHT IT--

I WASN'T EVEN THERE. I WAS TAKING A CALL OUTSIDE HIS ROOM.

THAT'S WHY I'M DOING ALL OF THIS.

TO ***SAVE*** HIM.

I'M SORRY, CHARLES. I HAD NO--

A MOST ***TOUCHING*** STORY.

AND WHAT BETTER WAY TO HONOR YOUR SON'S MEMORY...

"...THAN TO REUNITE HIM WITH HIS FATHER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE?"

I THINK THIS IS THE PLACE.

EINIGE SOLDATEN NÄHERN SICH.

WAS MACHST DU HIER?!

WIR HABEN NOCH ZWEI FAHRER GEFANGEN!

WHAT DID YOU SAY?

WE CAUGHT MORE OF THE DRIVERS AND WE'RE BRINGING THEM IN.

BY *WALKING*? BECAUSE THEY DON'T USE *CARS* NOW?

*UGH*, YOU ARE SO *BAD* AT THIS!

YOU *DO* KNOW THAT IN A SECOND, THEY'RE GOING TO REALIZE YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO MATCHES THAT PARTICULAR STASI...

...PALLOR.

I'M *WORKING* ON IT!

WE JUST NEED SOME KIND OF...

HAW-AWKFF! KAFF! KAFF!

...DISTRACTION.

OH MY GOD! GROSS!

WAS STIMMT NICHT MIT IHM?

ICH WEISS ES NICHT!

BITTE HELFEN SIE!

KAFF!

KAFF!

WAS STIMMT NICHT MIT DIR?

MOMENT MAL!

SCHAUE IHN AN! ER IST--

KAFF!

KAFF!

NOW!

KRAK

I--I AM SORRY.

PERHAPS I WAS TOO BOLD IN BELIEVING I COULD DO THIS--

YOU KIDDING ME, INSPECTOR? THAT WAS JUST WHAT WE NEEDED.

LET'S MOVE.

NNNGH!

DO NOT ASSUME I TAKE ANY ***PLEASURE*** FROM THIS.

I ASSURE YOU, I DO NOT.

YEAH, YOU LOOK ***ALL*** TORN UP ABOUT IT.

SUCH ***INGRATITUDE.*** YOU SHOULD BE GRATEFUL I HAD SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT PUTTING A BULLET IN YOU.

NOW, TELL ME WHY YOU ARE HERE, AND THIS UNPLEASANTNESS WILL END FOR ***ALL*** OF US!

***OH,*** FOR-- ASSHOLE! ENOUGH WITH THE ***BROKEN RECORD*** ALREADY!

YOU WANT US TO ADMIT WE'RE ***SPIES?*** FINE, WE'RE SPIES! YOU WANT INFORMATION? YOU ALREADY ***KNOW*** EVERYTHING!

YOU CAN TORTURE AND KILL AND ACHTUNG YOUR LITTLE FASCIST JOLLIES ALL YOU WANT, BUT THE ANSWERS YOU'RE LOOKING FOR ***AREN'T THERE!***

AND YOU ***KNOW*** IT.

I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT YOUR MOUTH ***TEMPERED*** BY NOW.

PERHAPS IT REQUIRES A MORE ***DIRECT--***

BANG BANG BANG

KOMMANDANT BUNDT! **KOMMANDANT BUNDT!**

BEWAFFNETE INVASOREN GREIFEN DIE FABRIC AN!

**WAS?!**

HELFEN SIE DEN ANDEREN! NIMM SIE AM LEBEN, WENN MÖGLICH!

BLEIB HIER UND BEOBACHTE SIE. WENN SIE SICH BEWEGEN, **ERSCHIESS** SIE.

JAWOHL, HERR COMMANDANT!

YOU DO NOT SPEAK DEUTSCHE, SO ALLOW ME TO TRANSLATE.

IF YOU MOVE, HE'S TO ***SHOOT*** YOU.

YEAH, WE PICKED UP THE ***SUBTEXT.***

WAS IST DIE LAGE?!

SOLDAT!

BANG

BANG BANG BANG BLURRRRRRRT BLURRRRRRRT

SO...

"...WHAT'S GOING ON?"

AKTUALISIEREN!

EINEN MOMENT, KOMMANDANT...

ES SCHEINT EINE KLEINE GRUPPE ZU SIEN, VIELLEICHT FÜNF ODER SECHS ANGGGGLLLKK!

WAS--?!

THERE, ON THE BALCONY. THAT UNIFORM--

HE'S THE KOMMANDANT.

HE'LL KNOW WHERE THEY ARE.

SCHEISSE.

TÖTE SIE! WIR KÖNNEN NIGHT ZULASSEN, DASS SIE GERETTET WARDEN!

TÖTE SIE JETZT!

SON OF A BITCH!

YOU'RE *DEAD!* DO YOU HEAR ME?!

YOU'RE DEEAAAAAADDFFF!

GEH VON MIR RUNTER!

BRAZEN COW! YOU *DARE* LAY HANDS ON ME?!

I'LL SEE YOU *SUFFER* IN WAYS YOU--

YEAH?

WHAT'LL A *FOOT* GET ME?

YOU-- *KILL*--

LET *GO* OF ME, YOU PIECE OF SH--

KRAK

WHAT THE HELL WAS--?!

OH. RIGHT.

SORRY IF KILLING OUR CAPTOR OFFENDS YOUR ***DELICATE SENSIBILITIES,*** JACKSON.

YOU'D RATHER KEEP HIM AROUND TO NOTIFY THE MILITARY AFTER HE ***MURDERED*** MS. LEVY?

I HAVE NO DOUBT "*MS. LEVY*" HAD IT UNDER CONTROL.

YOU ALL RIGHT?

I WILL BE AS SOON AS WE GET ***OUT*** OF HERE.

WE CAN HELP WITH THAT.

***STAND DOWN,*** MOIRAI. WE'RE FRIENDLY.

WYNN? INSPECTOR?

YOU'RE... ***RESCUING*** US?

YOU WOULD HAVE DONE THE SAME.

DON'T BE SO SURE.

STILL DOLING OUT THE ***CHARM,*** AREN'T YOU, MOIRAI?

COME ON, YOUR CARS ARE THIS WAY.

WAIT...

STAY CLOSE. THERE MIGHT STILL BE SOME GUARDS OUT THERE.

...I CAN'T GO!

LEVY! WAIT!

YOU DON'T HAVE TO--

COME ON...

PLEASEBE HEREPLEASEBE HEREPLEASE BE HERE...

YES!

GLLLK--!

STUPID WOMAN.

YOU CAME BACK...FOR *THIS?!*

I HOPE IT WAS WORTH THE *COST.*

NNNNGH!

BANG

GRRAAAAHH!

BANG BANG BANG

INSPECTOR?!

INSPECTOR, WHAT DID YOU--?

HAD TO MAKE SURE YOU WERE SAFE--

WE NEED TO *GO!*

IF WE GET YOU BACK TO THE CHECKPOINT, WE CAN STOP THE BLEEDING!

SO THE *PLAGUE* CAN HAVE ITS WAY WITH ME FOR THAT MUCH LONGER?

GO WITH THE OTHERS, MS. LEVY. GO AND--

WHAT ARE YOU *DOING?!*

MY CONDITION--

YEAH, WELL DON'T *BITE* ME AND WE'LL BE FINE.

MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT... MAYBE THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO...

...BUT I'M NOT LEAVING YOU HERE.

NOT WITH *HIM.*

HA HA.
BOOM.
WHERE HAVE YOU *BEEN*?! WOULD YOU *PROTECT* ME, ALREADY?!
SHE'S WORSE THAN *THEY* ARE!
WELL, *THOSE* GUYS ARE ALL DEAD!
*FINALLY!*
CAN WE GET *OUT* OF HERE, NOW?
NOT QUITE. WE DON'T KNOW IF ANY OF THEM WERE ABLE TO CALL FOR REINFORCEMENTS.
NOT TO MENTION THE FACT THAT WE *STILL* DON'T HAVE A PLAN FOR GETTING PAST THE WALL.
I BELIEVE I HAVE A SOLUTION FOR THAT.
ABAROA?!
WHAT HAPPENED?
MS. LEVY CAN EXPLAIN LATER. AS YOU POINTED OUT, THERE MAY NOT BE MUCH TIME.
YOU'VE BOTH HAD MILITARY TRAINING, CORRECT?
YESSIR.
THAT'S RIGHT.
GOOD.
YOU'RE GOING TO *NEED* IT.

JERMAND KOMMT.

TREIBER! INSPEKTION VORBEREITEN!

BITTE VERLASSEN SIE DAS FAHRZEUG!

RENDICIÓ-- SURRENDER. ***SURRENDER!***

DO YOU SPEAK ***ENGLISH?***

I SURRENDER.

INSPECTOR, ***PLEASE!*** YOU CAN STILL CHANGE YOUR MIND!

YOU DON'T HAVE TO--

NO, MS. LEVY...

...I DO.

REMEMBER EVERYTHING I TOLD YOU.

FIGHT. SURVIVE. WIN.

ER HAT EINEN ***SPRENGSTOFF!***

LAUF! ***LAUF!***

LIVE.

VAYA CON DIOS.

"ERON ABAROA.

"RAMONA PIETROWSKI. DALE TAGGART. DEVIN FILKE."

IT

THAT'S WHO THIS RACE HAS COST US.

AND THAT'S NOT COUNTING KAKKAR, GAEVEL, BEAUREGARD OR HIS GRANDSON, WHO BARELY HAD A CHANCE TO ***START*** THIS THING.

WAIT, ***WHAT?!***

I'M STILL WINNING ***EVERY*** RACE I CAN, NO MATTER WHAT!

***RELAX.*** IT'S JUST A TEMPORARY TRUCE TO WATCH EACH OTHER'S BACKS 'TIL THE FINAL LEG.

MAKE SURE THE OTHERS' SACRIFICE WASN'T IN VAIN SO THE SAME THING DOESN'T HAPPEN TO KESHINI, OR MOIRAI, OR--

WYNN AND I'VE BEEN TALKING AND, GIVEN WHAT JUST HAPPENED, WE WANT TO PROPOSE SOMETHING TO YOU ALL.

AN ***ALLIANCE.***

DUDE, WHAT ***IS*** YOUR NAME?!

IT'S ***BERGEN,*** MS. DOMINA. AND I LIKE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.

OF ***COURSE,*** YOU DO.

TOGETHER, WE HAVE A SHOT AT ***SURVIVING*** THIS. APART--

WELL, YOU KNOW.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | DOMINA | |
| 2 | HUIQING | |
| 3 | JACKSON | |
| 4 | PEHECHAAN | |
| 5 | MOIRAI | |
| 6 | LEVY | |
| X | ABAROA | |
| X | FILKE | |
| X | TAGGART | |
| X | PIETROWSKI | |
| X | GAEVEL | |
| X | BEAUREGARD | |
| X | KAKKAR | |

YOU KNOW QUELLEX IS GOING TO HATE THIS, RIGHT? HE ***THRIVES*** ON CONFLICT.

I'M GENUINELY SURPRISED HE DIDN'T STOP YOU FROM RESCUING ***US.***

WE CAN CROSS THAT BRIDGE WHEN WE COME TO IT. IN THE MEANTI-- WAIT.

WHERE'S--

LEVY?

WE'RE OUT HERE HAVING A MEETING. DO YOU WANT TO--?

OH, RIGHT. THE *PHONE.*

WHA--? NO, I--

HEY, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. THE PHONE'S IMPORTANT TO YOU, I GET IT.

I MEAN, IT'D *HAVE* TO BE, RIGHT? YOU RISKED YOUR LIFE FOR IT.

INSPECTOR ABAROA *DIED* FOR IT, SO I GUESS--

YOU THINK I DON'T *KNOW* THAT?!

I DON'T GIVE A *DAMN* ABOUT THE STUPID PHONE! BUT WHAT'S ON IT--WHAT'S ON IT--

IT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE.

QUELLEX *SHOWED* YOU SOMETHING.

YOU TALK A GOOD GAME ABOUT HOPE, BUT IF YOU HAD A PICTURE OF YOUR SON, *GROWN UP,* AND IT WAS THE ONLY THING KEEPING THAT HOPE ALIVE...

...KEEPING YOU *SANE* IN ALL OF THIS...

...WOULDN'T YOU DO EVERYTHING YOU COULD TO *HOLD ONTO* IT?

OR, DIDN'T QUELLEX SHOW YOU ANYTHING?

I--

WHAT HAPPENED, ALYSON?

THERE WAS A JOB, A REAL WHITE WHALE NUMBER. THE KIND PEOPLE WAIT THEIR WHOLE LIVES FOR.

THE KIND THAT GETS YOU ***OUT.***

THE GUY WHO PUT IT TOGETHER, I ***KNEW*** HE WAS TROUBLE, BUT I DIDN'T CARE. ALL I COULD SEE WAS THE PAYDAY.

BUT THERE WAS A PROBLEM...WE WERE A MAN SHORT. AND I--I KNEW SOMEONE.

IT TOOK A BIT OF WORK, BUT HE CAME ONBOARD.

BUT THINGS GOT HEATED, GUNS WERE PULLED. EVERYTHING JUST... EXPLODED.

AND-- AND IN THE CONFUSION, THE ONE I BROUGHT IN--

MY BROTHER, KEITH.

I ***KILLED*** HIM.

HOP

OUTRAGEOUS!

I WANT MY WAGER RETURNED!

AN ALLIANCE?! YOU HAVE TO STOP THIS!

YOU PROMISED US CARNAGE! VIOLENCE! DEATH! MURDER!

YOU CHARLATAN!

HOW *DARE* YOU?!

AFTER PROVIDING YOU WITH COUNTLESS HOURS OF SPECTACLE, YOU ***INSULT*** ME BY QUESTIONING WHETHER I'VE LOST CONTROL OF MY OWN RACE?!

I WORK TO BRING YOU VISCERAL ENTERTAINMENT, BUT ALL I HEAR ARE COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE ***CONTENT.*** YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE RACERS, ABOUT THEIR ***STORIES.***

YOU WANT SOMEONE TO BLAME FOR THIS TURN OF EVENTS? BLAME ***YOURSELVES.***

THIS ALLIANCE IS HAPPENING BECAUSE I ***DESIGNED*** IT TO HAPPEN. BRINGING THE RACERS CLOSER TOGETHER...

...TO BETTER RIP THEM ***ASUNDER*** AS THE RACE CONTINUES.

AN ACT MADE EVEN MORE ***INTRIGUING*** WITH THE PLACEMENT OF OUR ***MOLE*** IN THE RACE.

ASSUMING, OF COURSE, YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT MY ***OFFER...***

...MR. JACKSON.

I--WHAT IS--

WHERE *AM* I?

# CHAPTER

# 6

FOUR YEARS AGO...

...Kind of.

PRIVATE DOMINA.

SERGEANT BELACROIX. WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE?

JUST A LITTLE *RESTLESS.*

FIGURED I'D CHECK OUT THE SIGHTS.

TOO BAD THERE'S NOT MUCH IN THE WAY OF *SCENERY* AROUND HERE.

OF COURSE, WITH THE SUN GOING DOWN, IT'S GETTING HARD TO MAKE OUT ANYTHING.

HEY, YOU KNOW WHAT HAS GOOD LIGHTING? MY *QUARTERS.*

WELL, I'D NEVER WANT TO BE THE ONE TO DEPRIVE YOU OF ANY KIND OF *SPECTACLE.*

TOO BAD I'M ON DUTY TONIGHT.

AS IT HAPPENS, PRIVATE PETTIT OWES ME A FAVOR. I'M SURE HE'D BE HAPPY TO COVER FOR YOU.

AND, BARRING THAT, I OUTRANK HIM.

SHOULDN'T I WAIT FOR--

YOU KIDDING? YOU START UNDRESSING NOW, YOU'RE *STILL* GOING TO HAVE HALF THAT ARMOR ON WHEN HE GETS HERE.

JUST GO WAIT FOR ME...

...I'LL BE THERE BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.

NOW...

...Sort of.

COME ON, GIRL. JUST A LITTLE BIT FURTHER...

...AND WE'RE THERE BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.

ALYSON, IT'S WYNN. LOOKS LIKE WE'RE COMING UP ON A RIDGE.

YOU'VE GOT POINT POSITION...

...ANYTHING WE NEED TO WORRY ABOUT, OVER?

ALYSON, DO YOU COPY?

ALYSON, PLEASE RESPOND, OVER.

OH MY GOD, WOULD YOU SHUT THAT THING OFF?

THE CHATTERING'S DRIVING ME CRAZY!

YEAH, WELCOME TO MY WHOLE TRIP.

I GOT A QUESTION: ANYONE FIGURE OUT OUR LOCATION YET?

WE'VE BEEN DRIVING A WHILE AND I HAVEN'T SEEN ONE PERSON.

NOT EXACTLY PUTTING MY MIND AT EASE, MOIRAI.

WE'VE SEEN PLENTY OF THINGS POST-DAWN OF MAN THAT'RE MORE THAN HAPPY TO END US.

HOW ABOUT IT, LEVY? YOU SPOT ANYTHING, YET?

JESUS CHRIST, WILL YOU JUST SHUT UP ALREADY?!

FLORA SUGGESTS NORTH AMERICA, SOMEWHERE IN THE NORTHERN REGION.

NOT SURE OF WHEN, BUT THOSE BIRDS HAVE EVOLVED WELL PAST PREHISTORIC TIMES.

SHUTUP SHUTUP--

OH, SHI--!

MISTER BERGEN, IT LOOKS LIKE WE FOUND YOUR PEOPLE.

FROM THE UNIFORMS, I'M GUESSING WE'RE IN THE ***SEVEN YEARS' WAR...***

COR--! WHAT THE DEVIL ARE--?

SOME NEW VARIETY OF FRANCO REGIMENT, NO DOUBT.

***GIVE THEM NO QUARTER!***

***QUELLES SONT CES CHOSES?***

***JUSTE UNE AUTRE RUSE BRITANNIQUE ÉLABORÉÉ.***

***SUR MON ORDRE, ABBATTEZ-LES!***

...AND WE JUST GAVE THEM A COMMON TARGET.

SOUNDS PARTICULARLY ***ON-BRAND*** FOR THIS GROUP.

CAO!

HEH.

HA.

HAHAHAHAHA!

HAHAHAHAHAHA!

WOOOOOOOO!

CAO! ARE YOU OKAY?!

CAO, DO YOU COPY?

ANSWER ME, OV--

WAIT.

WYNN?!

WHAT'RE YOU--?!

GET BACK!

BRRRRRRT

BRRRRRRT

BRRRRRRT

GO! GET HIM *OUT* OF HERE!

GO!

LÂCHES!

HMM?

CE N'EST QU'UNE FEMME!

SAISISSEZ SA VOITURE ET AMENEZ-LA-MOI!

klik klik

OH.

ALL RIGHT...

...TIME TO *GO.*

VVZZZZMMM

HELL.

ANYONE LISTENING, THIS IS WYNN. I'M ***PINNED DOWN*** AND REQUIRE ASSISTANCE!

REPEAT, MY CAR IS ***STUCK*** AND HOSTILES ARE ADVANCING ON MY POSITION!

I NEED HELP!

HOLD TIGHT, WYNN! WE'RE COMING!

IF YOU'VE GOT ANYTHING TO HELP US KNOW YOUR LOCATION, LET--

I KNOW WHERE SHE IS!

SHE WAS RIGHT BEHIND US WHEN SHE TURNED AROUND!

SHE SHOULD JUST BE A COUPLE KLICKS BACK!

WE'RE DOING IT. WE'RE ACTUALLY GOING BACK *TOWARD* THE WAR.

LEVY? WHAT'RE YOU *DOING?!*

WE HAVE TO HEAD BACK! WYNN'S IN TROUBLE!

*LEVY! PICK UP YOUR DAMN COM!*

*LEVY!*

YEAH!

WHAT A *RUSH!*

YOU *SAW* ME OUT THERE, RIGHT?

1 LEVY
2 HUI@ING
- DOMINA
- JACKSON
- MOIRAI
- PEHECHAAN
X ADARO
X FILKO
X TAGGART
X PIETROWSKI
X GAEVEL
X BEAUREGARD
X KAKKAR

A *CANNON* SHOT ME RIGHT INTO THE--

*OH*, YOU *WON* THIS LEG! YOU'RE FIRST, RIGHT?

CONGRATULATIONS!

THANKS.

IT'S NICE TO HAVE SOMEONE ELSE HERE WHO FINALLY *GETS* IT.

WE'RE NOT DOING THIS FOR ANYONE BUT *US.*

NO WAY I'M RISKING *MY* NECK TO CLEAN UP WYNN'S MESS. THEY WANT TO GET THEMSELVES KILLED? FINE.

YOU AND ME?

2 HU

DOMINA

*WE* KNOW WHAT'S UP.

SEVEN MONTHS AGO...

13:44:

HOW ABOUT WE *FORGET* ALL OF THIS...

...AND JUST GO *HOME.*

HOW ABOUT *YOU* GO HOME, FRANK? YOU AND THIS WANKFEST YOU CALL A CREW.

ALYSON AND I'LL STICK AROUND AND TAKE CARE OF THE SCORE.

I GOTTA ADMIT, KID, YOU TURNED OUT TO BE A *REAL* SURPRISE.

I HAD MY DOUBTS WHEN YOUR SISTER BROUGHT YOU ON. FIGURED YOU WERE SOFT, OR *SQUEAL* IF YOU GOT PRESSED.

BUT I WAS WRONG. YOU GOT A SET OF *STONES* ON YOU.

QUESTION IS, YOU MAN ENOUGH TO *PACK* THEM?

I'LL *SHOW* YOU HOW MUCH OF A MAN I--

KEITH?!

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU *DOING?!*

MAKING SURE WE GET *EVERYTHING* WE DESERVE, ALYDEXTEROUS! YOU SAID IT, YOURSELF...

...THIS IS THE ONE WE'VE BEEN *WAITING* FOR.

BUT NOT LIKE *THIS.* THIS IS--

FRANK, I SWEAR, I HAD *NO* IDEA HE--

JESUS CHRIST, ALYSON.

EVERYTHING YOU'VE SEEN AND DONE...

...AND YOU'RE *STILL* A GODDAMN IDIOT.

DO YOU *REALLY* THINK THESE BOTTOM-FEEDERS WERE GOING TO LET US WALK OUT OF HERE? NEVER MIND GIVE US A FAIR CUT?

*YOU'RE* THE ONE WITH THE GUN, HOLMES.

YEAH, BECAUSE I'M *SMARTER* THAN YOU, "HOLMES."

I'M DOING THIS FOR *US,* ALY! AFTER ALL THE CRAP WE'VE BEEN THROUGH...

...PULLING DEAD-END JOBS, RISKING IT ALL TO MAKE SOME RICH PRICK RICHER--

DON'T *WE* DESERVE SOME OF THAT, TOO?!

YEAH, WE DO! IT'S WHY I TOOK THE JOB! IT'S WHY I *WANTED* YOU HERE!

BUT ALL OF THIS--WHAT YOU'RE DOING...

...IT'S *NOT* THE WAY!

WHA--?!

STRETCH--!

KEITH!

BANG BANG BANG

KEITH!

WE GOTTA *GO*, FRANK. SOMEBODY COULDA HEARD THEM SHOTS.

IF THE CHICK'S GONNA BE A *PROBLEM*, I CAN--

...

DON'T BOTHER. SHE'S BEEN NOTHING BUT STRAIGHT WITH ME.

GRAB WHAT YOU CAN, AND LET'S GO.

KEITH...I'M SORRY. I'M SO, *SO* SORR--

I CAN GET HELP. I CAN GET HELP. JUST *HOLD*--

YOU-- STUPID--ALL *YOUR.*

ALL... YOUR... FAULT--

KEITH?

I--I'VE GOT TO-- GOT TO--

NOW...

I GOTTA HELP WYNN.

DAMN IT.

GOD DAMMIT!

PLEASE, DON'T BE TOO...

...LATE.

LEVY.

CHARLES!

YOU'RE HERE! YOU MADE IT!

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | LEVY | |
| 2 | HUIQING | |
| 3 | JACKSON | |
| 4 | PEHECHAAN | |
| 5 | DOMINA | |
| 6 | MOIRAI | |
| X | ABAROA | |
| X | FILKE | |
| X | TAGGART | |
| X | PIETROWSKI | |
| X | GAEVEL | |
| X | BEAUREGARD | |
| X | KAKKAR | |

ALL OF YOU.

YEAH, WE'RE HERE. QUESTION IS...

...WHERE THE HELL WERE *YOU?*

WHAT--?

WE HAD AN ***AGREEMENT.*** WATCH EACH OTHER'S BACKS UNTIL THE FINAL LEG.

BUT WHEN WYNN ***NEEDED*** YOU, YOU JUST KEPT ON DRIVING.

I'D EXPECT THAT MOVE FROM ***CAO,*** BUT NOT YOU!

EVEN ***MOIRAI*** HELPED OUT!

OH, PLEASE...LEAVE ME ***OUT*** OF ALL THIS.

HOLD ON. WYNN PULLS A UEY AND ***PUTS*** HERSELF IN DANGER...

...AND YOU'RE ATTACKING ***ME?!***

HEY, NOBODY'S ATTACKING ***ANYONE.***

WE JUST THOUGHT EVERYONE WAS IN ON THE--

I WANT TO ATTACK HER.

TOO BAD I ACTUALLY AGREE WITH ***HOT TOPIC*** ON THIS ONE.

***NOT*** HELPING, KESHINI.

***OH,*** RIGHT, THE ***"BIG ARRANGEMENT."*** THE TRUCE, WHATEVER YOU CALL IT!

I WASN'T EVEN IN THE ***ROOM*** WHEN YOU DECIDED THIS! WHY THE HELL SHOULD I AGREE TO IT?!

THAT'S RIGHT...YOU ***WEREN'T*** THERE. YOU WERE ON YOUR PHONE, WATCHING THAT VIDEO OF YOUR ***BROTHER*** AGAIN.

EVER SINCE YOU TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM, YOU'VE BEEN ACTING--

YOU--

YOU HAVE ***NO IDEA*** WHAT HAPPENED TO MY BROTHER!

WHAT HE WENT THROUGH, WHAT HE DID, TO MAKE SURE I WAS CARED FOR!

WE WERE DESPERATE, LIVING ON THE STREETS UNTIL KEITH FOUND A WAY WE COULD SURVIVE. HE WAS THE ONE WHO SAW I HAD TALENT AND GOT ME INTO--WHAT'D YOU CALL IT?

***THE LIFE.***

BUT HE WASN'T AS LUCKY AS ME. HE GOT NABBED BY THE COPS AND SENT UP FOR A FEW YEARS. IT CHANGED HIM. MADE HIM HARD. ***CRUEL.***

STILL, DESPITE EVERYTHING, HE GOT OUT OF THE GAME. WAS ABLE TO MAKE PEACE WITH EVERYTHING THAT'D HAPPENED...UNTIL I PULLED HIM BACK IN.

IT WAS JUST SUPPOSED TO BE ONE LAST SCORE, A BIG ONE...SET US UP FOR ***LIFE.***

BUT FOR HIM, IT WASN'T ENOUGH. HE PULLED A PIECE ON OUR PARTNERS. THEY JUMPED HIM, THERE WAS A STRUGGLE AND--

WAIT.

YOU TOLD ME ***YOU*** KILLED--

I DISTRACTED HIM...GAVE THE OTHERS A WINDOW.

I MIGHT AS WELL HAVE PULLED THE TRIGGER MYSELF.

THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT GETS PERSONAL. PEOPLE WIND UP LIKE KEITH...OR INSPECTOR ABAROA.

YOU'VE BEEN TRYING TO SAVE ME SINCE WE STARTED THIS TRIP, CHARLES.

I DON'T KNOW WHY...

...BUT IT NEEDS TO ***STOP.***

FIVE YEARS AGO...

WHERE AM I?

OH, MY DEAR MISTER JACKSON...

...THAT IS GOING TO BE A TREAT TO EXPLAIN.

THIS, FOR YOU, IS THE FUTURE.

HUNDREDS AND HUNDREDS OF YEARS BEYOND ANYTHING YOU'VE EVER KNOWN.

BUT FOR ME, IT'S JUST WEDNESDAY.

WHAT IN THE--WHAT IS--NO.

THIS CAN'T BE--NONE OF THIS IS REAL! I MUST BE--

CRACKING UP?

I CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND YOUR REASONING. AFTER ALL, THERE YOU ARE, DONE UP IN YOUR SUNDAY BEST, HAVING JUST COME FROM PUTTING POOR LITTLE TYLER IN THE GROUND.

BUT BELIEVE ME, MISTER JACKSON...

...THIS IS ALL VERY REAL.

HOW THE HELL DO YOU KNOW MY BOY'S NAME?!

I KNOW MANY THINGS, CHARLES. LIKE HOW YOU BLAME YOURSELF FOR TYLER'S DEATH. HOW YOU KNOW YOU COULD'VE CAUGHT THE SIGNS, IF ONLY YOU WEREN'T WORKING SO HARD.

I KNOW YOU'D DO ANYTHING TO BE ABLE TO SEE YOUR SON AGAIN.

I KNOW HOW TO MAKE THAT HAPPEN, TOO.

WHAT'RE YOU--TY'S DEAD.

WELL, SURE...

...FOR NOW.

ALL OF THIS...YOUR PRESENCE HERE, MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE MOST INTIMATE ASPECTS OF YOUR LIFE...IT'S ALL DUE TO ***TIME TRAVEL.***

AND ***THAT*** IS HOW YOU SAVE YOUR SON.

I CAN TAKE YOU TO A TIME WHEN THE DISEASE THAT STOLE TYLER AWAY WAS IN ITS ***FORMATIVE*** STAGES. BEFORE IT'D HAD A CHANCE TO TRULY TAKE ROOT.

IT'S ***PREVENTATIVE CARE*** TAKEN TO A QUANTUM LEVEL.

AND IN EXCHANGE, ONCE YOUR SON IS PERFECTLY HEALTHY AND FREE OF ALL ILLNESS, YOU DO A FAVOR FOR ***ME.***

IN A FEW YEARS' TIME, THERE WILL BE A RACE, A PREVIEW OF WHICH YOU CAN SEE PLAYING AROUND YOU.

YOU WILL ENTER THIS RACE AND SERVE AS MY ***PROXY,*** IMPACTING AND MANIPULATING THE EVENTS AND ACTIONS OF THE CONTESTANTS TO MAXIMIZE THE DRAMA OF THEIR SITUATION.

THE CONTESTANTS WILL BE PEOPLE LIKE ***YOU***--UNFORTUNATES WHO HAVE SUFFERED A LOSS OR TRAGEDY AND HOPE TO REVERSE THEIR FORTUNES.

WHAT DO YOU SAY, CHARLES?

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING--IT'S A ***DREAM--***

NO, NO, IT'S JUST NOT ***POSSIBLE,*** EVEN WITH ALL THIS. WE'RE TALKING ***LIFE AND DEATH.***

I UNDERSTAND YOUR RELUCTANCE. YOU'RE A ***PRACTICAL*** MAN AND NEED PRACTICAL EVIDENCE.

IF YOU'LL INDULGE ME, JOIN ME ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS PORTAL...

...AND I'LL GIVE YOU ALL THE PROOF YOU ***NEED.***

WHA--MY ***HOUSE?***

BUT THE COLOR'S WRONG. WE GOT IT ***PAINTED*** A COUPLE YEARS BACK.

THAT'S BECAUSE WE'RE NOT AT THE SAME POINT OF TIME I PULLED YOU FROM. GO AHEAD...

...TAKE A ***LOOK.***

TY--?

YOU CAN BE WITH HIM AGAIN. ALL THE SUFFERING, ALL THE LOSS, WIPED AWAY.

JUST ACCEPT MY ***OFFER.***

YOU GOT IT. WHATEVER YOU NEED, WHATEVER IT TAKES--

YOU GOT A DEAL.

EXCELLENT. I'M SURE YOU'LL BE ***VERY*** HAPPY WITH YOUR CHOICE.

WHEN YOU'RE READY, JUST OPEN THIS BOX.

YOUR ESSENCE WILL MERGE WITH YOUR PAST SELF, BUT YOU'LL RETAIN YOUR CURRENT MEMORIES TO ASSIST IN CREATING NEW ONES.

AND IN A FEW YEARS, I'LL COME CALLING TO COLLECT ***MY*** SIDE OF THE ARRANGEMENT.

ONE LAST THING, MISTER JACKSON= REMEMBER THE NAME ***ALYSON LEVY.***

SHE'S GOING TO BE A ***MAJOR*** PLAYER IN EVENTS TO COME.

AHHH!

CHARLES?!

CHARLES, ARE YOU OKAY?

-KAFF-

-KAFF-

-KAFF-

-KAFF-

WE HAVE TO TAKE HIM TO A HOSPITAL.

WHAT? IT'S PROBABLY JUST A BUG HE CAUGHT SOME--

NO. WE *HAVE* TO TAKE HIM TO THE HOSPITAL.

NOW!

OKAY. OKAY, CHARLES, JUST RELAX!

LET ME GET MY JACKET, AND WE'LL GO.

DON'T WORRY, LITTLE MAN. I GOT YOU.

I *GOT* YOU.

ALLISON LEVY

NOW...

DAMN.

LEVY, WAIT! I'M--

NO, CHARLES...

...I'LL HANDLE IT.

ALYSON?

YOU MIND IF I JOIN Y--

WHY? WHAT DO YOU *WANT*, WYNN?

AN *APOLOGY*?

YOU'RE A SOLDIER, BRAVE AND HONEST, *BLAH BLAH BLAH*. AND TO YOU, I'M JUST SOME CRIMINAL DEGENERATE.

BUT *YOU* MADE THE CHOICE TO PUT YOURSELF IN DANGER. YOU DID THAT.

*FORGET* IT.

SINCE WE STARTED THIS, WE'VE BARELY TALKED TO EACH OTHER. AND I GET IT--

AND IF YOU THINK I *OWE* YOU SOMETHING BECAUSE I DIDN'T--

YOU'RE MISREADING THE SITUATION, ALYSON.

I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE TO *YOU*.

FOR WHAT?

FOR--

LOOK, WHAT HAPPENED OUT THERE--

I WAS STATIONED OVERSEAS... MIDDLE EAST. ROUTINE DEPLOYMENT.

YOU GO A LITTLE STIR-CRAZY OVER THERE, AND TO FIGHT IT, THIS SERGEANT AND I BECAME...CLOSE.

ONE NIGHT, I WAS ON SENTRY DUTY WHEN HE CAME AROUND. I WASN'T GOING TO SAY NO, SO I...***ABANDONED*** MY POST BEFORE MY REPLACEMENT ARRIVED.

THAT'S WHEN A GROUP OF INSURGENTS DECIDED TO STRIKE.

WE FOUGHT THEM OFF, BUT WHEN IT WAS DONE, WE'D LOST FIFTEEN GOOD MEN AND WOMEN. INCLUDING MY SERGEANT.

THAT'S ALSO WHEN I GOT THIS.

I'VE HAD A LOT OF THERAPY SINCE THEN. DEALING WITH THE LOSS, THE ***GUILT.***

I ***THOUGHT*** I'D MOVED PAST IT. BUT WHEN I SAW THOSE MEN OUT THERE, PINNED DOWN, HELPLESS...

...I WAS BACK IN THE DESERT.

AND I HAD TO SAVE MY FRIENDS.

I--SURE, OKAY.

BUT ***WHY*** ARE YOU APOLO--

BECAUSE OF THE ***BOY.*** IN CHINA. I SAW YOU WITH HIM, SAW YOU TRY TO SAVE HIM...

...AND I THOUGHT YOU WERE ***WEAK.*** THAT YOU DIDN'T HAVE WHAT IT TOOK TO BE IN THIS RACE.

BUT I WAS WRONG. AFTER HEARING ABOUT YOUR BROTHER AND MY OWN ACTIONS TODAY...

...I REALIZE I WAS BEING A HYPOCRITE.

MAYBE, BUT ON THE SLIDING SCALE OF ***DYSFUNCTION*** WE'VE GOT GOING ON, THAT'S THE LEAST OF--

YOU MIND IF I GIVE YOU SOME ADVICE?

FIND SOME KIND OF BALANCE. YOU CAN'T GIVE YOURSELF ENTIRELY OVER TO SOMETHING, BUT YOU CAN'T SHUT YOURSELF OFF COMPLETELY, EITHER.

I THOUGHT I WAS FINE...

...AND THE NEXT THING I KNOW I'M ***HERE,*** RACING THROUGH TIME, TRYING TO UNDO EVERYTHING.

YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYING?

I--I THINK SO.

LOOK, I'M NOT GONNA LIE, MY *"HEALING PROCESS"* USUALLY INVOLVES A FIFTH OF JACK AND SOME RANDO THAT'S OUT THE DOOR BY DAWN.

BUT IF YOU PROMISE NOT TO PUT YOURSELF IN ANY OTHER SITUATIONS WHERE YOU'RE EXPECTING ME TO ***SAVE*** YOUR ASS...

...I GUESS I CAN TRY.

THAT'S ALL ANY OF US CAN REALLY--

***DRIVERS, THE NEXT LEG WILL BE STARTING IN FIVE MINUTES.***

***PLEASE PROCEED TO YOUR VEHICLES.***

WHA--?! WAIT!

WE JUST ***GOT*** HERE!

MOIRAI! WHAT'S--?!

IT'S ONE OF QUELLEX'S TRICKS! RUNNING RACES ***BACK-TO-BACK*** TO THROW THE DRIVERS OFF.

I'VE SEEN IT BEFORE!

WE HAVEN'T RECOVERED FROM THE ***LAST*** LEG! HOW'RE WE SUPPOSED TO--?

YOU SHOULD KNOW DRIVER WELL-BEING ISN'T A ***PRIMARY*** CONCERN, MISS LEVY!

JUST HOPE FOR THE ***BEST...***

...AND PREPARE FOR THE ***WORST.***

***READY...***

***SET...***

***UGH,*** WILL YOU ***LOOK*** AT THIS? I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO TOUCH UP MY FACE! THAT'S ***TOO*** MUCH, EVEN FOR QUELLEX!

SO, WHAT KIND OF THROW-BACK CAVEMAN NONSENSE ARE WE DEALING WITH ***NOW?***

THAT'S THE THING, MISS PEHECHAAN.

THIS TIME...

...I THINK *WE'RE* THE THROWBACK.

# CHAPTER

# 7

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY YEARS AGO...

...Kind of.

PARDON ME!

PARDON ME! APOLOGIES!

HAH! THERE HE GOES!

RUNNING LATE AGAIN, EH, MOIRAI?

I DON'T UNDERSTAND!

NO MATTER WHAT I DO...

...I NEVER SEEM TO HAVE ENOUGH...

...TIME?

OH, MY DEAR LORD.

AW, SON OF A BITCH!

THE GODDAMN RADIATOR'S LEAKING!

HEY, YOU! KID!

TWO QUESTIONS! WHERE THE HELL AM I...

"...AND WHEN IS THIS?"

NOW...

...Sort of.

OKAY, WHERE THE HELL IS THIS PLACE?!

MOIRAI?

ANYONE?!

I THINK WE'RE IN THE FUTURE.

QUELLEX NEVER SAID WE'D ONLY BE RACING IN THE PAST, DID HE?

OH, GOOD, YOU REMEMBERED IT'S A RACE.

GO FASTER!

KESHINI'S ACTUALLY GOT A POINT. WE NEED TO FIND THE CHECKPOINT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

AT LEAST WITH THE OTHER LEGS, WE HAD SOME FRAME OF REFERENCE.

BUT IF THIS IS THE FUTURE, WE DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING.

THERE MIGHT NOT BE DINOSAURS, BUT THERE COULD BE SOMETHING WORSE.

ACTUALLY...

...THEY *DO* HAVE DINOSAURS HERE. THEY'RE GENETICALLY BRED AS PETS FOR THE BOURGEOIS, ROUGHLY THE SIZE OF A POODLE.

I'VE BEEN TO *MULTIPLE* CENTURIES BEYOND YOURS AND THEY'RE ALL...

...TERRIBLE.

MY WORD.

AFTER *ALL* THIS TIME.

COME ON--I KNOW YOU'RE HERE. YOU *HAVE* TO BE!

I *KNOW* I PUT YOU--

*DOES ANYONE HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT CITY THIS COULD BE?*

*IF IT'S SOMEPLACE LIKE NEW YORK OR PARIS, THERE MIGHT BE SOME LANDMARK WE CAN USE TO NAVIGATE--*

APOLOGIES, MISS DOMINA.

BUT THIS TIME...

...I'M *COMPLETELY* IN THE DARK.

KLK

WHAT?!

JACKSON! JACKSON, DO YOU HEAR ME?!

ANSWER ME *RIGHT NOW*, OR I'LL GO BACK AND--

QUELLEX?!

WHAT ARE YOU ***DOING***, SHOWING UP LIKE THIS?!

WHAT IF THE OTHERS SEE ME TALKING TO--

*THEY'LL FIND OUT ONLY IF OR **WHEN** I CHOOSE, NOT BEFORE!*

*NOW, I NEED YOU TO PUT EYES ON MOIRAI.*

*I'VE LOST HIS COVERAGE.*

IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S TURNING OFF THE MAIN ROAD.

*GOOD. **FOLLOW** HIM.*

*FOLL--?*
*I CAN'T--*

*IF HE CATCHES ME FOLLOWING HIM FOR NO GOOD REASON, HE'LL--*

YOU'RE A CLEVER MAN, JACKSON. ***FIND*** A REASON.

I WILL PROVIDE A ***DISTRACTION*** FOR THE OTHERS. RIGHT...

"...NOW."

HEY! THE MAP'S UP!

THAT'S FASTER THAN USUAL, RIGHT?

YEAH...A LITTLE *TOO* FAST.

IT'S LIKE QUELLEX WANTS TO KNOCK US OFF *THAT* MUCH SOONER.

I MEAN, **LOOK** AT THIS PLACE! THESE ROADS MAKE L.A.'S HIGHWAYS LOOK LIKE SOME BACKWOODS PODUNK.

WE HAVE NO IDEA HOW DRIVING EVEN **WORKS** HERE.

THEY MIGHT WANNA DISINTEGRATE US FOR FAILING TO SIGNAL!

I HADN'T EVEN THOUGHT OF THAT.

THAT'S *AMAZING!*

JESUS CHRIST, CAO.

I KNOW YOU'VE GOT THIS WHOLE ***NIHILISTIC JOYRIDER*** THING GOING ON, BUT JUST ONCE...

ALYSON! ARE YOU--?

NAH... I'M OKAY, WYNN. I JUST--

THIS GODDAMN RACE.

SERIOUSLY?! I STILL CAN'T GET A SIGNAL?!

WE'RE IN THE FUTURE!

THAT TECHNOLOGY'S LIKELY OBSOLETE NOW.

PEOPLE PROBABLY TALK USING BRAIN CHIPS, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

I'VE HAD A LOT OF DRIVERS IN MY LIFE, BUT NEVER ONE WITH AS MUCH USELESS INFORMATION AS YOU!

IT'S GOTTEN YOU BY SO FAR.

THEN MAYBE I SHOULD TRADE YOU IN FOR A LOCAL DRIVER TO--

MISS PEHECHAAN?

WE GOT COMPANY.

...READ THE DAMN ROOOOOOOH

MY GOD!

GOOD MORNING, DRIVERS! UNFORTUNATELY, IT WOULD SEEM WE CANNOT LOCATE YOUR VEHICLES IN OUR REGISTRY!

PLEASE HAVE YOUR **IDENTIFICATION CHIPS** READY.

UH, THEY SEEM... NICE.

ANY THOUGHTS?

JUST HOLD ON, BERGEN.

WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THESE THINGS ARE, WHAT THEY'RE AFTER, OR WHAT THEY COULD DO TO US.

DRIVERS, IT WOULD APPEAR YOU'VE MADE **NO** EFFORT TO PROVIDE US WITH YOUR CHIPS AS WE ASKED.

INSTEAD, WE'LL BE INITIALIZING OUR **SCANNING PROTOCOLS** TO BETTER ASSESS THE SITUATION.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR **CONSENT.**

OH, DEAR. THIS IS A SPOT OF **BAD LUCK.**

IT SEEMS YOUR VEHICLES ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH CURRENT STANDARDS. ADDITIONALLY, YOU ALL POSSESS **ABNORMALITIES** CONSISTENT WITH TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY PHYSIOLOGIES.

...IMMEDIATE ERADICATION.

NO!

YOU AND YOUR VEHICLES APPEAR TO BE IN DIRECT VIOLATION OF **TEMPORAL MIGRATORY** LAWS.

AS A RESULT, WE'LL BE INITIATING EXECUTIVE ORDER ONE...

I--

WILL YOU **GO,** ALREADY?!

I'M GOING! I'M GOING!

ENGAGING VEHICULAR SHUTDOWN PROCEDURE.

NO, DON'T BOTHER WITH ALL THAT. THOSE VEHICLES AREN'T PART OF THE CENTRALIZED HUB.

INITIATE **MANUAL PURSUIT.**

HEY, NEXT TIME YOU TALK TO WYNN, BE SURE TO CONGRATULATE HER ON HER **LEADERSHIP** SKILLS.

"JUST HOLD ON." **REALLY** GOOD CALL.

JUST KEEP YOUR HEAD DOWN, MISS PEHECHAAN.

**WAIT!**

HAS ANYONE SEEN CHARLES OR MOIRA?!

MOIRAI, CHARLES, IT'S WYNN! DO YOU COPY, OVER?

WE'VE HIT SOME--

CLICK

ACTIVATE.

I'M *CLOSE,* MY LOVE.

I'M *SO* BLOODY CLOSE.

*GOOD MORNING, DRIVER!*

WHAT?!

UNFORTUNATELY, IT WOULD SEEM WE CANNOT LOCATE YOUR VEHICLE IN OUR REGISTRY!

PLEASE HAVE YOUR IDENTIFICATION CHIP READY.

JACKSON?!

ACTIVATION SEQUENCE INITIATED.

GET READY, CASPER.

THIS ONE'S FROM THE HEART.

INSTEAD, I'LL BE INITIALIZING MY **SCANNING PROTOCOLS** TO BETTER ASSESS THE SITUATION.

WAIT, WHAT'RE YOU--?!

DRIVE.

MOIRAI?!

WHEN THAT THING FINISHES, IT'LL KNOW YOU'RE NOT FROM THIS TIME AND **KILL** YOU.

YOU WANT TO STAY ALIVE? FOLLOW ME.

AND **THEN,** MISTER JACKSON...

...YOU AND I HAVE A **GREAT** MANY THINGS TO DISCUSS.

COME ON!

GODAMMIT, GO!

AHH!

MOVE!

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?! CAN'T YOU SEE--

OH.

OF GODDAMN COURSE.

SON OF A--!

CAO?!

CAO? WHAT THE HELL?!

I GOT ENOUGH PROBLEMS WITH THE ROBOTS TRYING TO KILL ME!

RELAX!

I JUST NEEDED A BETTER **POSITION.**

FOR **WHAT?!**

THAT ONE, THERE. WHAT'S SHE UP TO?

I BELIEVE SHE'S LAUNCHING **METALLIC PROJECTILES** TOWARD US USING AN ANCIENT CHEMICAL PROPELLANT.

THEY USED TO BE CALLED **BULLETS.**

BANG BANG

CAO!

GET BACK IN YOUR CAR, YOU CRAZY BITCH!

YOU CAN'T EVEN SEE THE **ROAD!**

NNNFF!

HI! HOW'RE YOU?

JUST NEED TO BORROW YOUR CAR.

YOU THINK THEY CAN DAMAGE US? THOSE BULLETS?

OH, THAT'S **HIGHLY** UNLIKELY.

WE'RE FAR TOO ADVANCED FOR SUCH SKKRRAAW!

HAH!

YEAH!

YOU SEE THAT?!

YOU SAY I'M CRAZY, BUT SOMETIMES JUST SHOOTING THE THING...

...WORKS?

OOH.

MOVE YOUR CAR!

IT STALLED OUT!

JUST GIVE ME A SECOND!

YOU STUPID--WE DON'T HAVE A SECOND!

WE--

ALL RIGHT, THEN. GUESS I'M IN CHARGE, NOW.

REACQUIRING TARGETS--

WYNN?! WHAT'RE--?!

GET DOWN!

STAY DOWN, **BOTH** OF YOU! I'LL TRY--

DEPLOYING ERADICATION PROCEDURES...

...NOW.

WYNN!

ALL RIGHT, LADS, INITIATE SCANS.

ESTABLISH REVISED **TARGETING** PARAMETERS.

SHE'S *ALIVE.*

HELP ME! IF WE CAN GET HER TO THE CHECKPOINT--

I'M NOT STICKING AROUND FOR SOME LOST CAUSE, LEVY.

BESIDES, IF WE'RE COMMITTING SUICIDE...

...MY WAY'S MORE *FUN.*

BANG BANG BANG BANG

*RIGHT!* **TARGET ACQUIRED.**

*INITIATE MANUAL PURSUIT!*

SEE YOU AT THE CHECKPOINT...

...ASSUMING WE ALL *MAKE IT.*

*CAO!*

NNNF!

WYNN... JUST HOLD ON.

JUST HOLD ON!

OKAY. OKAY.

CALM DOWN AND THINK.

OKAY, THE CHECKPOINT'S RIGHT OFF THE NEXT RAMP.

YOU HEAR ME, WYNN? WE'RE ALMOST THERE!

GOOD MORNING, DRIVER!

WH--?

ARE YOU GODDAMN KIDDING ME?!

UNFORTUNATELY, IT WOULD SEEM I CANNOT--

YEAH, I KNOW, I'M NOT IN YOUR REGISTRY!

ANYONE LISTENING, THIS IS ALYSON, COME IN!

I'VE GOT WYNN IN THE CAR, BUT SHE'S HURT, *BAD.*

I DON'T KNOW IF SHE'S GONNA MAKE IT.

I'M COMING IN FAST, SO WHATEVER KIND OF SPACE-TIME FIRST-AID GARBAGE THAT PLACE HAS...

...NOW'S THE TIME TO FIRE IT--

WAIT...

...WHICH ONE IS IT?

THEY ALL LOOK *THE SAME!* WHICH ONE *IS IT?!*

SCREW IT.

HOLD ON, WYNN--

OH.

WELL...

...IT'S NOT *THIS* ONE.

LEVY! I WAS STARTING TO GET WOR--

WHERE WERE YOU?! WHY DIDN'T YOU ANSW--

FORGET IT. WE NEED TO FOCUS ON WYNN.

SHE'S *HERE!*

MOIRAI? CAN ANYTHING BE--

WE CAN ATTEMPT TO SLOW HER BLEEDING, BUT BEYOND THAT--

IT DEPENDS ON HOW POPULAR MISS DOMINA IS WITH THE ***VIEWERS.***

ONCE, A DRIVER WAS SO BADLY INJURED THAT THE CHECKPOINT HEALED HIM ENOUGH TO ALLOW HIM TO DRIVE AGAIN, SO IT'S NOT UNPRECEDENTED.

UNFORTUNATELY, IT'S ALL IN QUELLEX'S HANDS.

HOW IS SHE?

WHAT THE HELL DO ***YOU*** CARE?!

WYNN ***SAVED*** US, AND YOU LEFT HER TO ***DIE!***

MAYBE. OR, I ***DISTRACTED*** THOSE MACHINES SO YOU COULD BRING WYNN HERE.

I WONDER WHICH ONE IT WAS...

...

WHO THE HELL ***ARE*** YOU, LADY?!

JUST SOMEONE WHO'S FIGURED OUT THAT, AT THE END OF THE DAY...

...***NONE*** OF THIS MATTERS.

JESUS, I WISH THERE WAS SOME BOOZE IN THIS STUPID PLACE!

LEVY, ***WAIT!***

I WANT TO EXPLAIN--

GOOD...

...BECAUSE I ***REQUIRE*** AN EXPLANATION, MISTER JACKSON.

YOU FOLLOWED ME AND INSERTED YOURSELF INTO MY PRIVATE AFFAIRS.

MY ***PRIVATE AFFAIRS!***

YOUR--? MOIRAI, I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE ***TALKING*** ABOUT! YOU--

YOU SOUNDED LIKE YOU KNEW SOMETHING ABOUT THIS TIME, LIKE YOU'D BEEN HERE BEFORE!

I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT KNOW SOME KIND OF SHORTCUT OR SECRET WAY TO GET AROUND FASTER, SO I FOLLOWED YOU.

THAT'S ***ALL!***

I...DON'T KNOW. YOU, LOOKING AT SOMETHING. I'M GUESSING THAT WAS SOME KIND OF STORAGE UNIT?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON, MOIRAI, BUT IF YOU EVER WANT TO ***TALK,*** I'M--

MOIRAI?

HELLO?

I--

AND WHAT DID YOU ***SEE?***

HE CAN'T HEAR YOU, CHARLES.

NONE OF THEM CAN.

I'VE TAKEN THE LIBERTY OF FREEZING THEM IN TIME.

QUELLEX!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

I TOLD YOU, I COULDN'T TELL WHAT MOIRAI WAS--

DON'T WORRY YOURSELF, CHARLES. YOU PERFORMED YOUR TASK WITH APLOMB.

IF I'M BEING PERFECTLY FORTHRIGHT, I NEVER EXPECTED YOU TO DISCOVER ALL THAT MUCH.

LEMMON MOIRAI IS A GREAT MANY THINGS, BUT ABOVE ALL ELSE...

...HE'S PREPARED.

DID YOU KNOW THIS IS THE SECOND TIME HE'S DONE THIS TO ME?

COME TO THIS TIME PERIOD AND MANAGED TO BLOCK MY TRANSMISSIONS?

YOU KNEW THERE WAS A CHANCE HE MIGHT TRY SOMETHING?

WHY EVEN BRING HIM BACK IF--

WHY, TO SET HIM UP, OF COURSE! TO VERIFY MY SUSPICIONS OF HIM!

...UNFORTUNATELY, HE'S SO INGRAINED IN THE RACE'S HISTORY, I CAN'T AFFORD WHATEVER ANOMALIES MIGHT ARISE.

HERE...

MOIRAI HAS BEEN PLAYING A VERY MYSTERIOUS GAME AGAINST ME FOR QUITE SOME TIME.

AND WHILE IT'D BE SIMPLE TO JUST GO BACK AND THROTTLE HIM IN HIS CRIB...

THIS DEVICE, WHEN TRIGGERED, WILL SEND SOMEONE TO A POINT IN TIME WHERE THEY WILL DIE IN A RATHER ***EXCRUTIATING*** FASHION.

THEN, IT TEMPORALLY ***REVIVES*** THE INDIVIDUAL AND PUTS THEM THROUGH IT ALL OVER AGAIN.

A DELIGHTFULLY ENDLESS CYCLE OF TERROR, DEATH, AND REBIRTH.

WHY ARE YOU GIVING THIS TO ME?

*OH*, CHARLES... THE NAIVETÉ OF YOUR UNWAVERING DECENCY IS ONE OF THE THINGS I ENJOY ABOUT YOU THE MOST.

YOU'RE GOING TO ***INSTALL*** THAT DEVICE IN MOIRAI'S CAR. THEN, WHEN HE CROSSES THE CHECKPOINT'S THRESHOLD AT THE END OF TOMORROW'S RACE...

...HIS GAME WILL FINALLY BE AT AN ***END.***

# CHAPTER

# 8

EIGHT YEARS AGO...

...Kind of.

OH MY GOD, EVERYONE! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT.

WE DID IT!

I ASKED YOU ALL TO DONATE TO THIS WEEK'S CHARITY, THE WORLD WILDLIFE FUND. AND YOU GUYS...YOU GAVE OVER ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS!

AND LIKE I PROMISED YOU ALL, I'M GOING TO MATCH THAT AMOUNT... TIMES TEN.

THINK OF ALL THE ANIMALS WE'LL HELP!

KESHINI!

OOH, GOTTA GO, FOLLOWERS! MY DAD'S HERE AND HE DOESN'T LOOK HAPPY!

I'LL CHECK IN WITH YOU ALL LATER!

HARRIS HAS JUST SHOWN ME A STATEMENT OF YOUR ACCOUNTS!

YOU'VE GIVEN AWAY MILLIONS?!

YES, BUT DADDY, IT'S ALL FOR CHARITY!

I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY PEOPLE I'VE HELPED--

I HAVE NOT WORKED TO GIVE YOU THIS LIFE SO YOU CAN THROW IT AWAY ON WASTRELS AND LOST CAUSES!

YOU'LL COME TO SEE, DAUGHTER, THAT THE ONLY THING IN THIS WORLD TRULY WORTH SAVING...

I DO! TO THE PENNY!

OW! YOU'RE HURTING ME--

MAYBE THAT'S HOW I MAKE YOU UNDERSTAND!

"...IS YOURSELF."

OH MY GOD, THAT IS THE DUMBEST THING YOU'VE EVER SAID!

WE'RE NOT HAULING HER ALL OVER TIME! WHAT IF WE HAVE TO STOP AND, I DON'T KNOW, HELP HER OR SOMETHING?

IT COULD COST US THE WHOLE RACE... OR WORSE!

NOW...

...Sort of.

SOUNDS LIKE KESHINI'S PLAYING HER GREATEST HITS.

MOIRAI, WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE LEFT WYNN HERE, IN THE CHECKPOINT? COULD IT HELP KICK-START THE WHOLE MAGIC-TIME MUMBO-JUMBO THING?

HMM.

I'M AFRAID I DON'T HAVE AN ANSWER, MISS LEVY.

I'M SURE AT SOME POINT IN HISTORY SOMEONE REMAINED IN THE CHECKPOINT WHILE OTHERS WENT ONTO THE NEXT LEG...

...BUT NEVER DURING A RACE I WAS PART OF.

THAT SETTLES IT...WE CAN'T LEAVE HER. TOO MANY UNKNOWNS.

LOOK, SHE CAN RIDE WITH ME. I'VE GOT ENOUGH ROOM IN THE BACK SEAT TO MAKE HER COMFORTABLE AND--

I DON'T THINK THAT'S A GOOD IDEA.

WHY?

I HAVE MY REASONS.

JESUS, NOT ***THIS*** AGAIN! ANYTIME WE ASK YOU TO EXPLAIN YOURSELF, YOU JUST GIVE US SOME CRYPTIC GARBAGE ANSWER!

WHAT REASONS COULD YOU POSSIBLY HAVE? CHARLES HAS PROVEN HIMSELF TO EVERYONE HERE, AGAIN AND AGAIN!

MEANWHILE, WE STILL HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE DOING HERE, WHY YOU KEEP SNEAKING INTO THE RACE... ***ANYTHING.***

ALL I KNOW'S THAT WYNN ALMOST DIED IN THIS FUTURE TIME YOU'VE BEEN TO BEFORE, BUT YOU COULDN'T BOTHER TO CLUE US IN ON WHAT TO EXPECT!

EVERYONE HAS A PROBLEM WITH EVERYONE ELSE? FINE, WYNN STAYS WITH ***ME.***

I BROUGHT HER IN, AND FRANKLY, I DON'T THINK SHE'D SURVIVE RIDING WITH CAO.

***UH,*** I WAS NEVER ACTUALLY ***VOLUNTEERING--***

ANYONE GOT A PROBLEM WITH ***THAT?***

GOOD. NOW, LET'S CALL IT A NIGHT. I DON'T KNOW ABOUT ALL OF YOU...

"...BUT I'M EXHAUSTED."

I CAN'T DO THAT!

YOU'RE ASKING ME TO ***KILL*** MOIRAI!

IF YOU ***DON'T*** DO IT, CHARLES, YOU MAY FORCE ME TO RECONSIDER OUR ARRANGEMENT.

IF YOU'RE THREATENING ***TY,*** I SWEAR I'LL--

CHARLES, YOU ***WOUND*** ME! I'M NO MONSTER!

"I WOULD ***NEVER*** HURT A CHILD.

"WELL...

"...UNLESS YOU COUNT ME ROBBING HIM OF HIS ***FATHER.***"

CHARLES?

LEVY?

I THOUGHT YOU WERE WIPED OUT.

I WAS... I *AM.* GOT MAYBE THREE, FOUR HOURS OF SLEEP.

I CHECKED ON WYNN. IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S STABLE.

WHAT ABOUT Y--

SAME. JUST RESTLESS WITH EVERYTHING GOING ON.

I'M GLAD WYNN'S RIDING WITH YOU. SHE'LL BE IN GOOD HANDS.

YEAH. IT'S WEIRD, THOUGH. MOIRAI NOT WANTING HER TO RIDE WITH YOU.

YOU KNOW ANY REASON WHY HE'D FEEL THAT WAY?

I--WHO KNOWS?

I'VE MADE A *LOT* OF MISTAKES--

COME ON, CHARLES. WE'VE *ALL* MADE MISTAKES DURING THIS THING.

IN FACT...

...I'VE BEEN MEANING TO SAY SOMETHING TO YOU.

I--LOOK, THE WHOLE THING ABOUT MY BROTHER, TELLING YOU EVERYTHING... I DON'T LIKE PEOPLE SEEING ME THAT WAY.

VULNERABLE. *WEAK.*

SO, I OVERREACTED. I GOT DEFENSIVE AND PUSHED EVERYONE AWA--

LEVY, YOU STOOD UP FOR ME EARLIER, SO LET ME RETURN THE FAVOR.

EVERYTHING YOU'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT, WITH YOUR BROTHER...

...WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO GIVE YOURSELF A ***BREAK?!***

WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!

YOU MEAN ABOUT ***KEITH?!***

YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED, WHAT I DID!

YEAH, I KNOW IT. AND I'VE BEEN ***THINKING*** ABOUT IT.

WANT TO KNOW WHAT I CAME UP WITH?

YOUR BROTHER ***WASN'T*** A GOOD GUY. EVERYTHING YOU TOLD ME, EVERYTHING I'VE HEARD, IT SOUNDS LIKE ***HE*** BROUGHT IT ALL ON HIMSELF.

YOU'RE KILLING YOURSELF WITH GUILT OVER ACTIONS THAT WEREN'T EVEN ***YOURS.***

I--LOOK, KEITH WAS COMPLICATED, I KNOW.

BUT HE GOT ***OUT!*** HE GOT OUT OF THE GAME AND I PULLED HIM BACK--

SO ***WHAT?***

HE WAS A ***GROWN-ASS MAN.*** HE COULD'VE JUST SAID NO, TURNED DOWN THE JOB!

HE DIDN'T. HE ***CHOSE*** TO JOIN UP. AND THEN CHOSE TO ***BETRAY*** YOU AND THE REST OF THE CREW FOR A BIGGER CUT.

I KNOW YOU LOVED HIM. AND I KNOW YOU PROBABLY MISS HIM, DESPITE HOW HE TREATED YOU.

YOU DON'T--

BUT YOU DON'T DESERVE TO BE TORTURED OVER WHAT HE DID.

LOOK AT THIS! HE LOOKS HAPPIER THAN I'VE EVER SEEN HIM!

I TOOK THIS FROM HIM. I DID THAT!

NO, YOU GAVE HIM A CHANCE TO GO BACK TO HIS OLD WAYS AND HE DECIDED TO TAKE IT!

I'VE KNOWN PEOPLE LIKE THAT. IF IT WASN'T YOU, IT WOULD'VE BEEN SOMEONE ELSE.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS PICTURE? THAT HE'S OLDER AND ALIVE AND SEEMS HAPPY? ANYTHING ELSE?

QUELLEX IS A MASTER MANIPULATOR. HE'LL SHOW YOU EXACTLY WHAT YOU NEED TO SEE...

...AND THEN HAVE YOU DOING THINGS YOU NEVER DREAMED YOU WERE CAPABLE OF.

CHARLES, YOU DON'T-- I CAN'T--

LEVY, JUST DO ME A FAVOR AND THINK ABOUT IT. KICK IT AROUND.

THEN, IF YOU WANT, WE CAN TALK MORE AFTER WE FINISH THE NEXT LEG...

"...WHEREVER THAT'S GOING TO BE."

GET OUT OF THE WAY!

MOVE!

WHAT THE HELL *IS* THIS PLACE? THESE ROADS ARE EFFING *TERRIB--*

WAIT, ARE THOSE *PIRATES?!*

THIS IS THE BEST ONE YET! I *LOVE* PIRATES!

*OOH,* I GOT A HAT!

FOR GOD'S SAKE, CAO, DON'T ANTAGONIZE THEM! THIS ISN'T SOME ROMANTICIZED THEME PARK RIDE!

THESE ARE *THIEVES* AND *KILLERS,* MAKE NO MISTAKE!

WELL, THIEVING AND KILLING ASIDE, WE GOTTA FIGURE *SOMETHING* OUT. THE LONGER WE'RE OUT HERE, THE WORSE THINGS COULD GET FOR WYNN.

WE'RE BARELY MOVING.

I'M GETTING OFF THE MAIN DRAG.

HOPEFULLY IT'S LESS--

*LEVY, WAIT!*

SON OF A--!

IT'S NOT A ROAD, IT'S A GODDAMN *PATIO!*

HANG ON, WYNN.

WE NEED TO BACK UP--

BEGGIN' YER PARDON, MISSY...

TAP TAP

...BUT WHAT MANNER OF SORCERY BE RUNNIN' YER CARRIAGE?

IT MOVES, BUT WITHOUT A HORSE.

WHAT?!

*UH*, LOOK, I GOT OTHER STUFF GOING ON...

...SO GO WALK A PLANK, ALL RIGHT?

*HEY, WHAT'S HAPPENING UP THERE?*

*WE'RE PRETTY MUCH AT A STANDSTILL...*

...AND SOME OF THE NATIVES ARE GETTING AGGRESSIVE.

*EW, NO! GO! GET AWAY!*

CAN'T YOU ***GO AROUND*** THEM OR SOMETHING?!

I'M SORRY! I'M TRYING TO BACK UP!

ALL THIS HAS GOT TO BE SOME QUELLEX TRICK! IF WE'RE NOT MOVING, HOW'RE WE SUPPOSED TO TRIGGER THE...

...MAP?

WHAT THE HELL?

SINK ME SOUL TO THE BRINY DEEP!

THE CARRIAGE *IS* ENCHANTED!

TAKE IT, BOYOS! I'LL BE WANTIN' IT'S MAGIC FOR MESELF!

WHA--?

NO! YOU CAN'T--

STEP LIVELY, LADS!

I'VE NOT PLUNDERED A GHOST CARRIAGE BEFORE, SO YE BE--

KRAK

AAIIGH!

YOU...GENTLEMEN BEST FORGET YOU SAW ANY OF THIS TONIGHT.

*OH,* WE SHAN'T BE FORGETTING, YA BILGE RAT.

FACT IS, I'LL BE REMEMBERIN' YE ***PARTICULARLY*** WELL.

MISS LEVY, YOU CAN CONTINUE TO BACK UP.

***QUICKLY,*** PLEASE.

HOLY JESUS FU--

MOIRAI, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO--

*SAVE IT, MISS LEVY.*

*RIGHT NOW WE NEED TO REGROUP SOME-PLACE. FIGURE OUT THIS SITUATION...*

...AND IF THIS MAP IS CORRECT, I HAVE AN IDEA WHERE.

MISS LEVY, IN ABOUT A THOUSAND FEET, TAKE A SOFT RIGHT...

"...AND HEAD FOR THE WATER."

HOW'D YOU KNOW TO BRING US HERE?

THE MAP ON MY DASH HAD AN INDICATOR OF WHERE I WAS LOCATED, LIKE WE SEE ON OUR USUAL MAPS. AND THERE WAS A CLEAR PATH FROM THERE TO THE DOCKS.

WITH EVERY PIRATE WORTH HIS SALT IN TOWN GETTING ***LOADED...***

...I THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE A SAFE PLACE TO BE.

TRY A LITTLE ***HARDER*** NEXT TIME.

THIS PLACE SMELLS LIKE BO AND ***CHUM.***

WE ALL MUST'VE HAD DIFFERENT MAPS POP UP, BECAUSE I DIDN'T SEE AN INDICATOR AT ***ALL.***

I HAD AN AREA THAT LOOKED LIKE IT WAS LEADING OUT OF THE CITY ONTO A STRIP OF LAND.

YEAH, AND OURS HAD AN X ON IT. YOU KNOW, LIKE "X MARKS THE SPOT?"

YOU'D THINK THAT'D BE WHERE THE CHECKPOINT IS, BUT LOOK AROUND.

IT'S A ***HARD*** BUILDING TO MISS.

THEY'VE GOTTA BE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE SAME MAP. LAND LEADING INTO THE CITY, CITY LEADING DOWN TO THE WATER...

MAYBE IF WE PUT THEM TOGETHER SOMEHOW, THE CHECKPOINT'LL APPEAR?

MAYBE. AND WITH OUR CARS IN SUCH CLOSE PROXIMITY TO EACH OTHER--

EVERYONE, GO START YOUR ENGINES!

"ON MY MARK.

"THREE...

"TWO...

"ONE...

"...GO."

WELL, THERE WE ARE. AND THAT'S WHERE IT'S TELLING US TO GO.

YEAH, BUT STILL NO CHECKPOINT! WHAT'S THE--

IT'S A SCAVENGER HUNT.

WHAT?

*OH*, COME ON, THAT'S THE STUPIDEST THING I'VE EVER--

QUELLEX LOVES ADDING HIGH DRAMA AND NEW TWISTS TO HIS RACES. REMEMBER THE COUNTDOWN CLOCK IN CHINA?

THAT MAP PUTS US IN PORT ROYAL, IN THE MID-1600s. THAT'S THE HEIGHT OF PIRACY. AND IN THOSE TERMS, ANOTHER NAME FOR A SCAVENGER HUNT IS--

A SCAVENGER HUNT? MY FATHER USED TO HIRE PEOPLE TO DO THEM FOR MY BIRTHDAYS. FOLLOW THE MAP, FIND SOMETHING THAT LEADS YOU TO THE NEXT CLUE.

*DUH.*

*A TREASURE HUNT!*

YEAH, HOORAY AND ALL THAT, BUT WE STILL GOTTA GO THERE...AND WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR.

AND AS MUCH AS I HATE TO SAY IT, GIVEN THE ROADS, IT MIGHT BE EASIER ON FOOT.

GOD, ***WHATEVER.*** LET THEM ***LEAVE*** ALREADY!

BUT THERE'S NO WAY I'M GOING BACK THERE, AND THAT MEANS ***YOU'RE*** NOT EITHER!

MAYBE THAT'S FOR THE BEST, BERGEN.

SOMEBODY NEEDS TO STAY BEHIND AND KEEP AN EYE ON WYNN, TOO.

LOOK, THEY'RE GOING TO NEED BOTH OF YOU OUT THERE. I'D JUST BE OUT OF MY DEPTH...

...SO WHY DON'T I STAY BEHIND AND KEEP AN EYE ON WYNN AND KESHINI?

DON'T WORRY...

"...I PROMISE IT'LL BE FINE."

COME NOW, GENTLEMEN! MR. AMBERSON WOULD MAKE A FINE ADDITION TO YOUR HEARTY CREWS AND, AS A FORMER ROYAL COXSWAIN, CAN PROVIDE VALUABLE INFORMATION ON BRITISH STRATEGY!

WHO WOULD LIKE TO START THE BIDDING?

*OOH*, THAT MUST HIT CLOSE TO HOME, BEING FORCED TO SERVE SOMEONE HORRIBLE. JUST LIKE YOU AND ***KESHINI!***

YOU'RE REALLY WORKED UP ABOUT LEAVING HER BEHIND, AREN'T YOU?

SHE'S THE ***JOB.***

YEAH, BUT THERE'RE JOBS AND THEN THERE'S DRIVING A SPOILED BRAT AROUND WHILE VIKINGS AND DINOSAURS TRY AND KILL YOU.

I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE STILL DOING IT.

I BELIEVE IN SECOND CHANCES. AND KESHINI...

...SHE WAS A GOOD KID ONCE.

USED A LOT OF HER FORTUNE FOR CHARITABLE CAUSES, TRYING TO HELP PEOPLE AND SAVE ANIMALS AND ALL THAT.

I DID THE RESEARCH BEFORE I TOOK THE JOB...SAW THE VIDEOS SHE POSTED.

BUT HER OLD MAN'S A REAL PIECE OF WORK. HE DIDN'T LIKE WHAT SHE WAS DOING AND HE CUT HER OFF. THE WHOLE THING TURNED HER MEAN.

I'VE DONE THINGS I'M NOT PROUD OF, THINGS I COULD'VE PAID HARD FOR, BUT SOMEBODY GAVE ME ANOTHER SHOT. I TOOK THE JOB HOPING THIS'D DO THE SAME FOR HER. BUT, I DON'T KNOW IF--

SORRY, GOT DISTRACTED! BUT I FOUND A ***FANTASTIC*** COAT JUST LYING ON THE GROUND!

WHAT WERE YOU SAYING?

I--

SKIP IT.

ANY IDEA WHERE WE'RE AT?

ACCORDING TO THE MAP, OUR DESTINATION IS LOCATED JUST PAST THE NEXT INTERSECTION.

GOOD. I'M NOT USED TO COVERING THIS MUCH DISTANCE WITHOUT WHEELS.

MOIRAI... WHAT YOU DID EARLIER WITH THOSE PIRATES. I--

THINK NOTHING OF IT, MISS LEVY.

HOW IS MISS DOMINA FARING?

WYNN? SHE'S OKAY...I HOPE. THOSE LASERS CAUTERIZED THE WOUNDS, BUT SHE STILL LOST A LOT OF BLOOD AND--

WAIT, WHY'RE YOU CHANGING THE SUBJECT?

I'M NOT CHANGING ANYTHING. I'M JUST ASKING ABOUT THE WELL-BEING OF A FELLOW DRIVER.

I WOULDN'T WANT YOU THINKING I'M ***DISINTERESTED.***

OKAY, SORRY FOR WHAT I SAID EARLIER, BUT AFTER PLAYING TOUR GUIDE FOR SO MANY LEGS, YOU UP AND ***DISAPPEAR?*** AND WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT CHARLES--

I'M SURPRISED YOU DIDN'T HAVE AN ISSUE WITH HIM STAYING BEHIND TONIGHT.

I ***DO.*** BUT JACKSON WAS RIGHT...MR. BERGEN IS BETTER SUITED FOR THIS.

BUT ***WHY?*** WHAT'S YOUR ISSUE? WHAT DID HE--?

HE FOLLOWED ME DURING THE LEG IN THE FUTURE. HE FOLLOWED ME AND THEN ***SPIED*** ON ME WHILE I WAS--

THE MAP WAS UP, WITH A CLEAR PATH TO THE CHECKPOINT. AND JACKSON HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST CHAMPION OF EVERYONE STAYING TOGETHER TO SURVIVE.

SO, WHY ABANDON ALL OF YOU TO FOLLOW ME?

WHAT REASON COULD HE HAVE--

I--ANYWAY. FORGET I SAID ANYTHING.

WE NEED TO FOCUS ON--

DAMMIT, MOIRAI! DON'T PULL THAT "*MAN OF MYSTERY*" CRAP AGAIN.

IF YOU WANT ME TO BELIEVE ***ANYTHING***, YOU GOTTA GIVE ME MORE THAN JUST WILD ACCUSATIONS!

WHAT WERE YOU DOING IN THE FUTURE? WHAT DID CHARLES SEE?

WHY ARE YOU EVEN ***IN*** THIS RACE?

...

I'VE NEVER BEEN A PART OF THIS RACE. NOT OFFICIALLY, ANYWAY.

I WAS LIVING AN ORDINARY, BORING LIFE WHEN ONE OF QUELLEX'S RACES CAME ALONG. CRASHED RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME, AS A MATTER OF FACT.

I MET ONE OF THE DRIVERS, HELPED HIM WITH HIS DAMAGED CAR, AND HE INVITED ME TO JOIN HIM.

I WAS MORE THAN HAPPY TO LEAVE MY BORING LIFE BEHIND.

WE BECAME... CLOSE.

THEN, DURING THE FINAL LEG OF THE RACE, HE--

SORRY TO INTERRUPT...

...BUT I THINK WE'RE HERE.

WELL, THIS IS JUST *DELIGHTFUL.*

SUBTLE, NUANCED, WITHOUT A *HINT* OF TRYING TOO HARD.

RIGHT?! IT'S *PERFECT!*

COME ON!

REMEMBER WHAT MISS PEHECHAAN SAID! WE'RE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING THAT WILL GIVE US A CLUE THAT WILL LEAD US TO THE CHECKPOINT!

BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR. SO CHECK EVERY WALL, EVERY ITEM, EACH INDIVIDUAL!

AND BE READY FOR...

...ANYTHING.

UMMMM...

...SPREAD OUT?

"SEE WHAT YOU CAN FIND."

BEG YOUR PARDON. I DIDN'T SEE YOU--

YOU.

NO, THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME. IT'S A *VERY NICE* TATTOO...

...FOR ALL THE BLOODY GOOD IT'LL DO--MMMM?

AYE, YE VILE *PICAROON*...

...CAPTAIN LYSANDER SKYTTE. AND I BE REMEMBERIN' *YE* ALL TOO WELL.

BUT BEFORE YE DANCE THE HEMPEN JIG, YE BEST BE TELLIN' ME WHERE I CAN FIND YER ENCHANTED CARRIAGE. THE ONE YE RODE ALONGSIDE THAT FINE LASSIE THAT SET ME NETHERS ALL ABLAZE--

MORAI?! WHAT THE HELL'S GOING--?

*OH, CHRIST.*

AYE, SHE'S THE ONE!

AND SHE RODE AN ENCHANTED CARRIAGE AS WELL!

CAPTAIN! WE FOUND THIS ONE AS WELL! CLEANED AND SCRUBBED AND DRESSED MOST PECULIAR!

HE LOOKS T'BE OF GOOD STOCK.

MIGHT FETCH A HANDSOME PRICE AT THE AUCTIONS.

NOW, LASS, YE BEST BE TELLIN' ME WHERE YER KEEPIN' THOSE CARRIAGES. YER FRIEND BE DESTINED T'MEET JACK KETCH, BUT WE CAN REACH AN *UNDERSTANDING.*

YER A FETCHING WENCH, DESPITE YER AGGRIEVED TRESSES.

I BARELY UNDERSTOOD ANY OF THAT. ARE YOU *HITTING* ON ME?

*HARD PASS,* CRUNCHBERRY.

*ARRR,* YE BE FULL OF SPITFIRE NOW, BUT WE'LL SEE HOW FORKED YER TONGUE BE WHEN YER KEELHAAA*AAUUUWWW!*

*WHO?!* WHO'S THE SCURVY DOG THAT THREW THAT BOTTLE?!

WAS IT *YE?!*

*OH, NO.*

SURE WAS, CAPTAIN. YOU WANT A *FIGHT?*

*LET'S GO.*

UGH. STUPID NIGHT FILTER--

KIDS. I SWEAR--

OKAY... OKAY...

...I CAN DO THIS.

WH-- THERE YOU ARE.

COME HERE, YOU LITTLE--

CHARLES, CHARLES, CHARLES...

...WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG, BUT I BELIEVE WE HAD AN AGREEMENT.

QUELLEX?!

WE DON'T HAVE AN AGREEMENT...NOT ABOUT THIS!

SPYING'S ONE THING. THIS IS STRAIGHT UP, COLD-BLOODED MURDER.

I'M REMOVING THE DEVICE AND THEN I'M DONE.

OH, CHARLES... YOU REALLY BELIEVE YOU HAVE A CARD TO PLAY HERE?

TURN AROUND.

OH MY GOD.

YOU'RE WORKING WITH HIM?!

BERGEN!

BERGEN!

SON OF A--!

NOW SHE REMEMBERS HIS NAME!

KESHINI, CALM DOWN!

IT'S NOT WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE--

IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE TRYING TO KILL PEOPLE!

I'M NOT-- IT'S MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT!

DAMMIT, KESHINI...

...WAIT!

DON'T YOU *TOUCH* ME!

I'M SORRY! I WAS JUST TRYING TO--

WAIT!

AAAAHH!

LOOK--

KRACK

K-KESHINI?

KESHIN!

# CHAPTER

# 9

TEN YEARS AGO...

...Kind of.

...TELL HIM IT'S METASTASIZED AND WE NEED TO BE MORE AGGRESSIVE IF WE'RE--

OH, MRS. HUIQING.

DR. TREMETTI! I'M SORRY, I WAS JUST LOOKING--

I KNOW I'M A LITTLE EARLY, BUT YOU SAID TODAY YOU'D HAVE THE--

YES, YES, I HAVE YOUR RESULTS.

PLEASE...

...HAVE A SEAT.

NOW...
...Sort of.

BEST YE BE TAKIN' A SEAT NOW, LASSIE.

I CAN SEE YE'VE GOT A *FIRE* IN YER BELLY...

...BUT YER PLUM SQUIFFY THINKIN' YE CAN CROSS SWORDS WITH OL' CAPTAIN SKYTTE!

ASIDES, THE WAYS OF THINGS MAY DIFFER IN THE ORIENT...

...BUT IN THESE PARTS, GOIN' ON ACCOUNT BE STRICTLY A *MAN'S--*

HWEEP

FOUL WENCH!

YE FANCY A SCRAP?!

I'LL CLEAVE YE TO THE *BRISKET!*

CAPTAIN! CAPTAIN, WHAT ABOUT--?

AH, BLIMEY...

SO WHAT DO WE DO WITH THESE BLIGE-SUCKERS?!

HOLD ONTO 'EM BEST AS YE CAN!

THE CAPTAIN'LL STILL BE WANTIN' THEIR SORCEROUS CARRIAGES!

NOW!

GLLLK!

NNFFF!

BAD MOVE, AHAB. YOU SHOULD'VE JUST--

WHAT--?!

PLASTIC?!

NFFF!

YE SHAN'T BE ESCAPIN' US, YA SCURVY DOG!

IF YOU *SAY* SO.

*LEVY! MOIRÁI!*

THE CLUE!

I'VE *GOT* IT!

BERGEN--?!

LOOK!

HOLY-- *NICE* ONE, BERGEN!

NOW, WE JUST GOTTA FIND...

*...CAO!* CAO, GO FOR THE DOOR!

WE'RE *LEAVING!*

WHA--?!

HAH!

WHAT *SKULL-DUGGERY* IS THIS?!

YE CAN'T JUST *BOUND* AWAY FROM A--

SORRY, CAPTAIN.

GUESS YOUR TIMBERS JUST GOT *SHIVERED.*

OKAY, WHO'S *NEXT?!*

I'LL TAKE ON EVERY SINGLE ONE OF--

MISTER BERGEN, PLEASE GRAB MISS HUIQING, WON'T YOU?

WE DON'T HAVE *TIME* FOR THIS.

NO! PUT ME *DOWN!*

I WASN'T *DONE* YET!

YOU DO REALIZE SHE *SAVED* US, DON'T YOU?

YEAH, WELL, WE CAN DEAL WITH THAT *LATER.*

LET'S JUST GET BACK TO THE DOCKS...

"...AND GIVE THEM THE GOOD NEWS."

CHARLES?

JESUS, CHARLES...

...WHAT HAP--

MISS PEHECHAAN?!

MISS PEHECHAAN!

COME ON, YOU *HAVE* TO BE--

WHAT DID YOU *DO?!*

YOU TOLD ME YOU'D *WATCH* HER! YOU SAID YOU WOULD--

IT WAS AN *ACCIDENT.*

SHE-- SHE WAS OVER BY THE SHIPS, TAKING A SELFIE. SHE STUMBLED AND *FELL IN.*

I WENT AFTER HER, GOT HER OUT. BUT SHE MUST'VE HIT HER HEAD, BECAUSE WHEN I FOUND HER, SHE WAS--

I'M *SORRY.* I TRIED, BUT I COULDN'T--

JUST-- JUST SHUT UP, JACKSON.

BERGEN, I'M--

SHE WAS RIGHT. IT WAS ***MY JOB*** TO PROTECT HER.

I NEVER SHOULD'VE LEFT.

OR, I'M SURE AS HELL GOING TO ***TRY.***

SHE'S NOT STAYING HERE, JUST A NAMELESS CORPSE IN A HISTORY BOOK NO ONE READS.

I'M GETTING HER HOME, TO THE PEOPLE WHO ***CARE*** ABOUT HER, LIKE SHE DESERVES.

***RRRAARRGGHHH!***

MISS LEVY...

...WHAT I SAID EARLIER. ABOUT JACKSON--

*NOT* THE TIME, MOIRA!

CHARLES!

I DON'T EVEN *KNOW* WHAT TO--

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

AM I ALL RIGHT?

HOW CAN YOU *ASK* THAT?

I KNEW... I *KNEW* THERE WAS GOING TO BE A RISK IN ALL OF THIS! THAT ANY SECOND, SOMETHING COULD JUST SPRING OUT OF NOWHERE AND THAT WOULD BE IT...GAME OVER.

BUT I WAS DOING IT FOR *TY.* I WAS DOING IT FOR HIM BECAUSE GETTING HIM BACK WAS WHAT *MATTERED.* I ACCEPTED THE RISK AND WENT IN, EYES OPEN.

BUT *THIS--*

THIS SHOULD *NEVER* HAVE HAPPENED.

I WAS FOOLING MYSELF... I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING. I'M *TRAPPED,* JUST LIKE ALL OF YOU.

I JUST WANT THIS TO BE *OVER.*

WELL, WE'RE ONE STEP *CLOSER* THERE.

MOIRAI, GIVE ME THE SKULL.

ARE YOU CERTAIN THAT'S THE ***BEST*** COURSE OF--?

***DO*** IT.

SEE? PLASTIC. AND THE--

YEAH, I SEE THE DATE.

SO WHAT?

HOW DO WE KNOW THIS IS THE CLUE? WHAT IF THERE ARE ***DOZENS*** OF TRINKETS LIKE THIS SCATTERED THROUGH THE CITY? AND YOU JUST GRABBED THE FIRST ONE YOU FOUND?

THIS ENTIRE GAME TURNS ON QUELLEX'S WHIM. YOU ***CAN'T*** TRUST HIM TO DO WHAT HE SAYS!

JACKSON, THE ***REST*** OF US HAVE BEEN SAYING THAT ALL ALONG.

INTERESTING TO SEE YOU'RE ***JUST NOW*** COMING TO THAT CONCLUSION.

BUT IF YOU ***NEED*** ME TO GO BACK TO THE BAR, I'M HAPPY TO--

KNOCK IT OFF, CAO.

MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT, CHARLES. BUT FOR NOW, THIS IS WHAT WE'VE GOT.

OKAY, SO HOW DOES IT--?

MOIRAI HAS A FEW THOUGHTS ON THAT.

SPECULATION, REALLY. SINCE THE SKULL MAY HYPOTHETICALLY SHOW US THE LOCATION OF THE CHECKPOINT, I SUSPECT OUR CARS MIGHT SERVE AS SOME KIND OF TRIGGER.

WHAT THAT COULD BE, I DON'T KNOW. BUT I'LL FIGURE IT OUT...

"...NO MATTER **HOW** LONG IT TAKES."

HOW'S SHE DOING?

OKAY, I THINK. RESTING, WHICH IS MORE THAN THE REST OF US CAN SAY.

HOW ABOUT Y--

AFTER THIS LEG, I WANNA DRIVE WYNN THE REST OF THE WAY.

I'M NO CONTESTANT...I'M NOT WINNING ANYTHING. BUT IF YOU'RE DRIVING HER AND CROSS THAT LINE FIRST, THE PRIZE GOES TO ***YOU.***

SHE SHOULD HAVE A SHOT AT IT, TOO.

YOU OKAY WITH THAT?

I MEAN-- YEAH. IT'S ONLY FAIR.

OF COURSE, WHO KNOWS HOW LONG BEFORE THE NEXT LEG.

MOIRAI'S BEEN WORKING ON IT ALL NIGHT, AND SO FAR HE'S FOUND...

...NOTHING?

IT'S THE *MAP!*

AND ASSUMING IT'S CORRECT, THE CHECKPOINT IS...

*...HERE!* AT END OF THE PIER!

ACTIVATING THE MAP MUST HAVE SUMMONED IT!

COME ON, CHARLES! ONE STEP CLOSER TO HOME!

*RELAX,* LEVY...I'M COMING.

I SHOULD'VE HAD MORE FAITH IN YOU AND MOIRAI THAN I--

*OH* MY GOD...THE *DEVICE.*

MOIRAI! *WAIT!*

MOIRAI, STOP!

BLOODY--!

JACKSON?! WHAT THE *DEVIL* ARE YOU--

NOT NOW, MOIRA!!

I'LL EXPLAIN LATER, BUT I'VE GOT TO--

GOT TO--

WAIT. WHERE'S--

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR, MISTER JACKSON...

...THIS?

WHAT--?

I LOOKED OVER MY ENTIRE CAR LAST NIGHT, HOPING TO FIND SOME COMPONENT THAT WOULD ACTIVATE THE SKULL.

YOU CAN IMAGINE MY SURPRISE WHEN I FOUND YOUR LITTLE ***DOOMSDAY*** GIFT WAITING FOR ME.

DID YOU BELIEVE I WOULDN'T RECOGNIZE THIS TECH? OR KNOW OF THE ***TEMPORAL AGONY*** IT'S CAPABLE OF DELIVERING?

QUELLEX HAS BEEN USING THIS KIND OF THING AGAINST HIS OPPOSITION FOR ***YEARS.***

AND YOU WERE ***STILL*** GOING TO DRIVE RIGHT INTO THE CHECKPOINT.

I GUESS YOU'LL TAKE ***ANY*** WAY OUT, EVEN ONE AS PAINFUL AS--

DON'T BE OBTUSE. I ***LET*** YOU STOP ME IN ORDER TO FLUSH YOU OUT!

***WHEN,*** JACKSON? WHEN DID QUELLEX GET HIS CLAWS INTO--

AN ***EXCELLENT*** IDEA, CAO!

LET'S GO INSIDE AND SHARE MY FINDINGS WITH ***ALL*** OUR FELLOW DRIVERS, SEE WHAT THEY HAVE TO...

HEY, DON'T MEAN TO INTERRUPT, BUT YOU GUYS'VE GOT TO COME INSIDE AND CHECK SOMETHING OUT.

IT IS ***CRAZY.***

...SAY?

***OH, MY.***

GENTLEMEN, PLEASE COME IN.

YOU'VE ALL BEEN WORKING SO HARD TO MAKE THIS RACE A SUCCESS, I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE NICE TO TAKE A BEAT AND ***UNWIND*** FOR A LITTLE BIT.

GET ***REAL.***

FOR EXAMPLE, MAYBE HAVE A CONVERSATION ABOUT MY ***REAL*** HISTORY WITH THE EVER-STALWART CHARLES JACKSON.

AS YOU CAN SEE, HE AND I HAVE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR QUITE SOME TIME...WELL BEFORE THE RACE BEGAN. IN FACT, HE'S ONLY HERE TO KEEP ME APPRAISED OF THINGS AND TO CORRECT AND STEER YOU ALL IN THE PROPER DIRECTION... ***PARTICULARLY*** MISS LEVY.

ALLISON LEVY !

WHY, HE EVEN AGREED TO HANDLE SOME PEST CONTROL ISSUES FOR ME, ONLY TO RENEGE ON OUR ARRANGEMENT. A SHAME, REALLY.

BUT STILL, UNTIL LAST EVENING, CHARLES WAS WORKING AT MY BEHEST AND NONE OF YOU WERE THE WISER.

AND AS FOR YOU, CHARLES-- YOU WANTED TO BE ***DONE?*** CONGRATULATIONS...

...YOU'RE ***FINISHED.***

WELL, EXCEPT FOR POOR KESHINI, AND WE KNOW HOW ***THAT*** TURNED OUT.

BUT DON'T BE GLUM! LEMMON MOIRAI HAS SOMEHOW SURVIVED ***ANOTHER*** RACE! SILVER LININGS ALL AROUND!

WHAT--

WHAT THE HELL *IS* THIS?

ALLISON LEVY

IT--

IT'S THE *TRUTH.*

QUELLEX CONTACTED ME YEARS AGO, RIGHT AFTER TY'S FUNERAL. HE TOLD ME HE COULD CHANGE EVERYTHING, GIVE ME A CHANCE TO SAVE MY SON. I DIDN'T BELIEVE HIM.

BUT THEN HE *SHOWED* ME, TOOK ME BACK TO WHEN TY WAS STILL ALIVE. I COULD MAKE BETTER DECISIONS, PAY CLOSER ATTENTION, GET TY TO THE DOCTORS BEFORE IT WAS TOO LATE.

AND ALL I HAD TO DO WAS ENTER A RACE. ENTER IT AND KEEP HIM INFORMED ON WHAT WAS HAPPENING. HONESTLY, I FORGOT ALL ABOUT IT.

BUT THEN HE SHOWED UP TO CALL IN THE FAVOR AND I LEARNED IT WAS NO ORDINARY RACE. AND WHAT I WAS EXPECTED TO DO WAS MORE THAN JUST KEEP TABS ON PEOPLE.

I DIDN'T WANT ANY OF THIS, BUT HE SAVED MY BOY. HE *SAVED MY BOY.*

WHAT ELSE COULD I *DO?*

YOU SON OF A BITCH. YOU COULD'VE DONE ANYTHING DIFFERENT. *ANYTHING!*

BUT YOU *DIDN'T.*

NOW KESHINI'S *DEAD* AND I'M GONNA--

I TOLD YOU, IT WAS AN *ACCIDENT!* SHE SAW ME TALKING TO QUELLEX AND RAN. I TRIED STOPPING HER TO EXPLAIN, BUT SHE TRIPPED!

LEVY, COME ON, YOU *KNOW* ME! YOU KNOW I COULDN'T DO THAT!

I HEARD WHAT QUELLEX SAID, CHARLES. I SAW YOU PUT MY NAME INTO YOUR PHONE. THIS WHOLE TIME YOU'VE BEEN, WHAT, WATCHING ME FOR HIM? *GROOMING* ME FOR SOMETHING?

I DON'T KNOW YOU *AT ALL.*

*WAIT.*

JUST... WAIT.

WYNN! OH MY GOD.

ARE YOU--?!

JUST TIRED.

I'VE BEEN FADING IN AND OUT FOR A BIT, NOW...

...AND I KNOW CHARLES *IS NOT* LYING.

I HEARD HIM TALKING TO QUELLEX AT THE DOCKS, AND KESHINI DISCOVERING THEM.

HE HAS A LOT TO ANSWER FOR...

...BUT KESHINI ISN'T ONE OF THEM.

MAYBE THAT'S TRUE, BUT HIS ACTIONS *STILL* PUT HER THERE. AND PLANNING TO KILL MOIRAI--

I'M DONE. FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, HE'S ON HIS OWN.

IT'S IRONIC, ISN'T IT, JACKSON?

BY TARGETING *ME* AND TURNING EVERYONE AGAINST *YOU,* WE'RE FINALLY GIVING YOU WHAT YOU'VE WANTED FROM THE START...

"...A GROUP UNITED."

UH, I'M NOT REALLY GOOD AT THIS...

...BUT IF I DON'T MAKE IT BACK HOME, I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING.

KESHINI PECHAAN WASN'T THE BEST PERSON, BUT SHE ***COULD'VE*** BEEN. AND SHE WAS A COLOSSAL PAIN IN MY ASS...

...BUT SHE DIDN'T DESERVE THIS.

I'M PRETTY SURE NONE OF THEM DID.

TO KESHINI PEHECHAAN.

INSPECTOR ERON ABAROA.

UH...DALE TAGGART.

SURE, WHY NOT?

DEVIN FILKE.

JACK METCALF.

WHO'S JACK MET--?

NEVER MIND.

THERE'S A BIGGER ISSUE WE NEED TO DISCUSS...

...NAMELY, WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT JACKSON?

LEAVE HIM HERE, FOR ALL I CARE. LET THE PIRATES DEAL WITH HIM.

ISSUE SOLVED.

WE ARE ***NOT*** DOING THAT.

ALYSON, I KNOW YOU'RE UPSET, BUT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER...

...CHARLES IS ONLY IN THIS SITUATION BECAUSE HE WENT ***AGAINST*** QUELLEX, TRIED TO SAVE MOIRA! BEFORE IT WAS TOO LATE.

JUST BECAUSE MOIRAI DISCOVERED THE DEVICE DOESN'T MEAN--

SO, WHAT, HE DECIDED ***NOT*** TO KILL SOMEONE AND THAT MAKES IT ALL OKAY? HE ***STILL*** WOULD'VE KEPT LYING TO US!

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU THINK THAT JUSTIFIES--

I'M NOT SAYING IT JUSTIFIES ***ANYTHING!*** JUST THAT--

IF QUELLEX APPROACHED ***YOU*** RIGHT AFTER KEITH DIED AND MADE THAT OFFER, WOULDN'T YOU TAKE IT? DO ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING TO BRING YOUR BROTHER BACK?

I KNOW I WOULD'VE!

CHARLES IS A ***GOOD MAN*** AT HEART. HE MADE MISTAKES, BUT HE WOULDN'T BE AGONIZING ABOUT ALL OF THIS IF HE WASN'T.

AND WHATEVER KIND OF PUNISHMENT YOU CAN COME UP WITH, IT'S NOWHERE NEAR AS BAD AS LIVING WITH HIMSELF WHEN ALL THIS IS DONE.

DRIVERS, THE NEXT LEG WILL BE STARTING IN FIVE MINUTES.

PLEASE PROCEED TO YOUR VEHICLES.

WHA-- ALREADY?

OKAY, THEN...

...GUESS IT'S TIME TO GO.

OKAY, WYNN, EASY DOES IT...

LEVY.

I KNOW THERE'S NOTHING I CAN SAY TO MAKE UP FOR WHAT I DID. I KNOW YOU'LL NEVER TRUST ME AGAIN.

I JUST HOPE YOU'LL ***HEAR*** ME ONE MORE TIME.

EVERYTHING I SAID ABOUT KEITH, ABOUT HIS DEATH...I MEANT EVERY WORD. IT IS ***NOT*** ON YOU.

IF YOU BELIEVE NOTHING ELSE, ***PLEASE*** BELIEVE THAT...AND SET YOURSELF ***FREE.***

...

WAIT...

WHAT THE ***HELL--?!***

LEVY?

CAO?! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU *DOING*?!

GET IN YOUR DAMN CAR!

HMM?

OH, YEAH, NO NEED.

I'M STAYING HERE!

WHAT ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT?!

CAO, OF ALL OF THE CRAZY CRAP YOU'VE PULLED IN THIS RACE, THIS IS THE--

ALYSON--

LOOK, I'VE GOT THIS THING, OKAY? IT'S GENETIC, NO CURE, NO UNDOING ANYTHING BY GOING BACK IN TIME.

IT'S JUST WHO I AM.

I SPENT MOST OF MY LIFE DOING WHAT I WAS EXPECTED TO, SAYING THE RIGHT THINGS, LIVING FOR *OTHER PEOPLE.*

BUT EVER SINCE I LEARNED ABOUT MY THING, I'VE BEEN LIVING FOR *MYSELF.* GOING EVERYWHERE I WANTED TO, DOING EVERYTHING I COULD, FIGURING OUT WHO I REALLY WAS.

WHERE I *REALLY* BELONGED.

I THINK IT MIGHT BE HERE. THE CHAOS, THE EXCITEMENT, THE DANGER... *ALL* OF IT.

I TOLD YOU I WASN'T IN THE RACE TO WIN. I WAS IN IT FOR THE ADVENTURE.

AND I *FOUND* IT.

CAO--I CAN'T EVEN--

THEN DON'T. GO BACK TO YOUR CAR AND SAY GOODBYE TO THE OTHERS FOR ME.

AND GOOD LUCK! HONESTLY, I THINK YOU'RE THE *BEST* DRIVER HERE...

...BESIDES ME, OF COURSE.

5...

4...3...2...

1...

OKAY, SO WHERE THE HELL ARE...

...WE...

...NOW?

OH MY GOD.

EVERYONE...

HOLLYWOOD

...WE'RE BACK.

NOW...

...Most Definitely.

GARBARK 20

# CHAPTER

# 10

NOW...

OKAY... EASY DOES IT...

...Kind of.

HANDS AT TEN AND TWO...

...AND AVOID THE LIQUID FRICKING *NIGHTMARE* OUTSIDE.

JESUS!

GODDAMMIT, *COME ON!*

YOU GOT ME *THIS* FAR! JUST NEED YOU A LITTLE BIT--

--ORT IN THAT FOR THE SHORT TIME YOU HAVE **LEFT.**

WHAT'RE YOU--

*AAAAHHHHHH!*

OH GOD, I-- NO!

*NOOOOO!*

TWENTY-SIX MINUTES AGO...

WE'RE BACK WHERE WE *STARTED.*

E-SH

...Kind of.

WAIT, WHERE'S CAO?!

SHE TOLD ME--SHE SAID SHE FELT MORE AT HOME WITH THE PIRATES.

SHE STAYED.

THAT'S--

ACTUALLY, THAT TRACKS FOR HER.

SO, WHAT NOW?

YEAH, WE'RE IN THE PRESENT...

...BUT DO WE KNOW THIS ISN'T JUST ANOTHER LEG, THAT QUELLEX ISN'T SCREWING WITH US AGAIN?

NO, WE DON'T.

BUT UNTIL WE FIGURE IT OUT, AIM THIS THING FOR DODGER STADIUM...

...AND *GO.*

WHA--?!

WELL...

...GUESS THE TRUCE IS OVER.

WHERE'RE THE OTHERS?

ALYSON'S COMING UP FAST. CHARLES AND MOIRAI ARE LAGGING A BIT.

WE NEED TO GET OFF THESE STREETS, FIND SOME ROOM TO RUN.

MAYBE THE FREEWAY--

THIS TIME OF DAY, IT'LL BE A PARKING LOT.

STICK WITH--

DON'T WORRY, DRIVERS...

...AFTER EVERYTHING YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH, ENDING ON SOMETHING MUNDANE AS A STREET RACE WOULD BE **ANTICLIMACTIC.**

FORTUNATELY, I HAVE A WORKAROUND.

QUELLEX.

A DELIGHTFUL LITTLE JAUNT ABOUT TOWN, TAKING IN THE **SIGHTS** OF THE CITY...

...FROM **START** TO **FINISH.**

WHAT ARE YOU UP TO, CASPER?

WHY, MOIRAI, I RESENT THAT ALLEGATION!

I'M JUST OFFERING A **HELPING HAND** TO REACH THE FINISH LINE QUICKER...

...WHETHER YOU **DESERVE** TO OR NOT.

AFTER ALL...

...I CAN'T MAKE THIS **TOO** EASY FOR YOU.

WHA-- WHERE'D THE SUN GO?!
SON OF A--HE SENT US SOMEWHERE AGAIN, DIDN'T HE?!
LOOK AT THEM, OVER THERE. HOW THEY'RE DRESSED.
WE'RE IN THE PAST AGAIN.
OPTICAL
I THINK THESE ARE THE ZOOT SUIT RIOTS! I HEARD ABOUT THEM ON A PODCAST.
YEAH? WELL, THEY'D BETTER STAY OUT OF OUR WAY OR THEY'RE GONNA GET HIT.
GNNAAHH!
ONE FINAL *INDIGNITY*, EH, CASPER?
IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN *THIS* TO STOP ME!
HELLO? HELLO?! CAN ANYONE *HEAR* ME?!
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE GONE OR GIVING ME THE COLD SHOULDER, BUT IF YOU'RE THERE...
CHRIST...
...WE REALLY SCREWED IT ALL UP, DIDN'T WE?
WAY TO GO, HUMANITY.

BERGEN, ALL I SEE ARE A BUNCH OF UNIFORMS TERRORIZING INNOCENTS FOR NO GOOD REASON.

FAR AS I'M CONCERNED...

...HIT AWAY.

LOS ANGELES. 1946.

YOU *HEAR* ME, QUELLEX?!

I'M *STILL* HERE!

LOS ANGELES. 1928.

...I COULD USE SOME *HELP!*

LOS ANGELES. 10947 BC.

YEAH...

...GOOD QUESTION, SIGN.

DAMN GOOD QUESTION.

LOS ANGELES. DATE UNDETERMINED.

AHHHH!

MAGMA AND FIRE. *LOVELY.*

AT LEAST I'LL *DRY* QUICKER.

*MOIRAI?!*

ARE YOU OKAY? WHERE THE HELL *ARE* WE?

WYNN, BERGEN, ARE YOU THERE?

WE'RE HERE! AND IT LOOKS LIKE CHARLES MADE IT, TOO!

AS FOR THE *WHERE,* NO IDEA! WE WERE JUST IN THE NINETEEN FORTIES.

AND I WAS IN THE TWENTIES. QUELLEX MUST HAVE MOVED US AROUND LOS ANGELES'S TIMELINE.

I ASSUME MISS LEVY AND JACKSON WERE IN SIMILAR SITUATIONS...

*...WHICH LIKELY MAKES THIS THE BIRTH OR DEATH OF IT ALL.*

WELL, IF YOU BOTHERED *ASKING* ME, I COULD--

*POOR CHARLES...*

...NOBODY WANTS TO HEAR YOUR TALES OF OUTRACING **MAMMOTHS.**

WHAT DO YOU **WANT,** QUELLEX?

OH, JUST TO REVEL IN THE **IRONY** OF IT ALL. THAT HERE, AT THE BEGINNING OF EVERYTHING...

...YOUR STORY COMES TO A **CLOSE.**

ALL RIGHT, THAT'S **ENOUGH!**

I'M **SICK** OF YOUR VAGUE THREATS AND YOUR DOUBLESPEAK! YOU WANT TO HURT ME? THEN GET TO IT.

DO YOUR **WORST.**

OH, MY DEAR CHARLES...

...I DON'T EVEN NEED TO DO **THAT.**

WHA-- WHAT DID YOU **DO?**

WE AREN'T **MOVING--**

THAT'S BECAUSE I **SHUT YOU DOWN.**

GIVEN EVERYTHING I HAD INSTALLED IN YOUR CAR, YOU REALLY SHOULD'VE **ANTICIPATED** THIS AS A POSSIBILITY.

SO YOU'RE GOING TO **STRAND** ME HERE? LEAVE ME TO DIE?

FOR YOUR BETRAYAL? HOW **BORING** WOULD THAT BE?

NO, THIS WILL BE THE CLOTH PURE DRAMA IS WOVEN FROM, REMEMBERED **YEARS** FROM NOW...LITERALLY AND FIGURATIVELY.

TAKE COMFORT IN THAT FOR THE SHORT TIME YOU HAVE LEFT.

WHAT'RE YOU--

AAAAAHHHH!

OH GOD, I--NO!

NOOOOO!

LEVY? LEVY, ARE YOU THERE?

I KNOW YOU DON'T WANT TO, BUT PLEASE, JUST LISTEN!

I-I NEED YOU TO FIND TY. MAKE SURE HE'S OKAY. TELL HIM WHAT I DID AND THAT I'M SO, SO SORRY.

YOU'LL DO THAT FOR ME, WON'T YOU, LEVY?

LEVY?

LEEEEEAAAll-*

CHARLES?

CHARLES!

CHARLES, ARE YOU THERE? ***PLEASE*** PICK UP!

I--

I--

WELCOME RACERS

"IF YOU AIN'T MOVING, YOU'RE DYING."

"FIGHT. SURVIVE. WIN. **LIVE.**"

"WE'RE NOT DOING THIS FOR ANYONE BUT **US.**"

"EVERYTHING YOU'VE SEEN AND DONE...

...AND YOU'RE **STILL** A GODDAMN IDIOT."

RRRAAAAGGH!

"ALL...YOUR... FAULT."

"YOU DON'T DESERVE TO BE **TORTURED** OVER WHAT HE DID."

"I SPENT MOST OF MY LIFE DOING WHAT I WAS EXPECTED TO."

"LIVING FOR **OTHER PEOPLE.**"

"YOU CAN'T GIVE YOURSELF ENTIRELY OVER TO SOMETHING."

"WHAT IF YOU HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE IT GO AWAY?"

"FIND SOME KIND OF **BALANCE.**"

"YOU HAVE THE CHOICE TO LEAVE THAT DARKNESS BEHIND, YOU JUST NEED TO **MAKE** IT."

"BELIEVE THAT..."

"...AND SET YOURSELF FREE."

AND THE VICTOR...

WHA--?!

...ALYSON LEVY!

OKAY, WHERE THE HELL AM I NOW?!

QUELLEX?! IS THAT YOU?

YES, ALYSON DEFEATED THE OTHER RACERS AS SHE BRAVED SUCH THREATS AS DINOSAURS, PIRATES, AND ANCIENT WARRIORS...

...ALL FOR THE CHANCE TO REUNITE WITH THE BROTHER SHE LOST!

BUT, DESPITE THOSE DANGERS, NOTHING HURT MORE THAN AN ACT OF BETRAYAL...

...AT THE HANDS OF THE TRAITOROUS CHARLES JACKSON.

YET, SHE PERSEVERED, FINDING THE COURAGE TO--

OH, SCREW THIS!

QUELLEX, GET YOUR ASS--

RELAX, MISS LEVY...

...I'M *HERE.*

AND I COME BEARING PRIZES.

WHAT *IS* IT?

WHY, IT'S WHAT YOU ***WANTED,*** OF COURSE! THE WAY BACK TO YOUR BROTHER!

I MUST ADMIT, IT PLEASES ME TO HAND YOU THIS. THE DAY WE MET, I KNEW YOU HAD THE MARKINGS OF A CHAMPION.

SO MUCH THAT I PLACED A FEW SIDE WAGERS. MADE QUITE A KILLING ON YOU.

THOUGH THE KILLING I MADE ON JACKSON WAS ***MUCH*** MORE SATISFYING.

NOW IT'S TIME! THINK OF WHAT YOU WISH TO CHANGE, AND YOU'LL BE SENT BACK FOR THE CHANCE TO MAKE IT RIGHT.

BUT DON'T DAWDLE, MISS LEVY...

...KEITH IS WAITING!

*"THE FACT I'M EVEN IN THIS RACE TELLS ME HOPE IS NEVER OFF THE TABLE."*

AAHHHH!

HOLY SH-- IT WORKED. IT WORKED!

OH, RIGHT...

...IT WORKED.

OKAY, GIRL...

...I NEED YOU TO GIVE ME EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT, RIGHT DOWN TO THE--

--ORT IN THAT FOR THE SHORT TIME YOU HAVE LEFT.

NO.

WHAT'RE YOU--

AAAAHHHHHH!

SON OF A BITCH, NO!

OH GOD, I--NO!

NOOO--

CHARLES!

LEVY? WHAT--?

SHUT UP AND FOCUS ON MY VOICE!

YOU HAVE TO GET OUT OF THERE!

BUT I CAN'T-- THERE'S NO--

THE WINDSHIELD! IT'S ALREADY SMASHED!

MAYBE YOU COULD--

-KOFF- -KOFF-

I--

NNNGH!

NNNGH!

NNAAAHHHH!

YES! YES, YOU DID IT!

GODDAMMIT, CHARLES...

I--LEVY, I'M SO TIRED.

I CAN'T--

-KOFF- OKAY, NOW HURRY!

YOU NEED TO GET TO THE TOP AND JUMP.

WHAT?!

...JUMP!

-HUFF-
-HUFF-
CATCH YOUR BREATH LATER.
THIS AIR'S NOT GOING TO DO YOU MUCH GOOD...
...AND WE NEED TO MOVE.
BUT... HOW DID YOU REACH ME?
YOU WERE AHEAD--
NEVER MIND THAT.
IF WE DON'T MAKE IT THROUGH THAT PORTAL...
...IT WON'T MATTER ANYWAY.
WAIT, IS THAT--?
IT'S *COLLAPSING!*
LEVY, WE DON'T KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN IF WE GO THROUGH AN OPENING THAT SMALL--
YEAH, BUT WE KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN IF WE *DON'T.*
WITH THOSE CHOICES...
...I'LL TAKE MY CHANCES.

AAAAUUHHHNFF!

WE--WE MADE IT!

I AM GENUINELY SURPRISED RIGHT NOW!

ALYSON!

WHAT HAPPENED? YOU WERE RIGHT BEHIND US AND--

WAIT, IS THAT JACKSON?! I THOUGHT I HEARD HIM--

YOU DID... OR, I MEAN, HE WAS ABOUT TO.

LUCKY FOR HIM, I WAS IN A GOOD SPOT TO GRAB HIM BEFORE ANYTHING SERIOUS HAPPENED.

SO, WYNN... DID QUELLEX TAKE HER?

SHE WAS FIRST ACROSS THE LINE, RIGHT?

YES, SHE WAS. ODD YOU'D AUTOMATICALLY ASSUME THAT.

BUT BACK TO JACKSON. YOUR REACTION TIME, THE DISTANCE YOU MUST HAVE COVERED TO REACH HIM...THAT'S EXTRAORDINARY.

YEAH, I THOUGHT SO T--

OH, HELL.

OKAY, SO WHAT WAS THAT?!

I--I HAVE NO IDEA.

HEH.

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT YOU'VE ***DONE?!***

THERE WERE ***EXPECTATIONS*** TO BE MET! EMOTIONAL THROUGH-LINES TO ADDRESS, SWELLING ORCHESTRATIONS TO SIGNIFY THE REUNION OF BELOVED SIBLINGS!

AND THE ***PARADOXES!*** OH, DEAR GOD, THE PARADOXES--

LEVY... ***WHAT*** IS HE TALKING ABOUT?

NO IDEA. ***WYNN*** WON THE RACE. I JUST SAW A DRIVER IN TROUBLE AND WENT BACK TO HELP.

I MEAN, YEAH, IT WAS A LAST-MINUTE CHANGE, BUT IT ***WORKED.***

BESIDES, WHAT'S MORE DRAMATIC THAN A ***BIG TWIST?***

YES, WELL, IF YOU HADN'T BEEN SUCH A HIT WITH THE VIEWERS...

...THIS CONVERSATION WOULD BE GOING ***VERY*** DIFFERENTLY.

I HOPE IT DOESN'T STING ***TOO*** BAD, CASPER. I KNOW HOW SENSITIVE LITTLE BOYS ARE ABOUT THEIR AGENDAS.

BUT UNLESS YOU'RE PLANNING ON SOMETHING TO RILE UP THE ***FANS,*** I THINK IT'S TIME YOU CUT US LOOSE.

YOU'RE AN ***EXCEPTIONALLY*** FORTUNATE MAN, JACKSON, HAVING SOMEONE LIKE MISS LEVY IN YOUR CORNER.

NOW, JUST TELL ME WHERE YOU'RE GOING...

"...AND GET THE HELL OUT OF MY LIFE."

YOU *DID* IT, DIDN'T YOU? YOU WON THE RACE AND SAVED *ME* INSTEAD OF YOUR BROTHER.

*WHY?*

I--

WHEN I WAS IN THE FINAL STRETCH, I KEPT THINKING ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE HAD SAID TO ME... YOU, WYNN, THE INSPECTOR, EVEN CAO AND QUELLEX.

I THOUGHT ABOUT WHO KEITH REALLY WAS, WHAT HE'D DONE, WHETHER HE ACTUALLY *DESERVED* TO BE SAVED.

BUT IN THE END, IT CAME DOWN TO SOMETHING *I* SAID:

"I DIDN'T DO IT FOR *YOU*."

DAD?

EVERYTHING OKAY?

YEAH, SON! EVERY-THING'S *FINE.*

LEVY, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO--

LOOK, CHARLES, YOU MADE MISTAKES... *BAD* ONES. BUT YOU MADE THEM FOR GOOD REASONS. I GET THAT NOW.

YOU DESERVE THE RIGHT TO LEARN FROM THOSE MISTAKES. AND TY DESERVES A FATHER WHO'D DO ANYTHING FOR HIM... INCLUDING TEACHING HIM TO *AVOID* MAKING BAD CHOICES.

YOU'VE GOT A *THIRD* CHANCE WITH HIM, CHARLES.

GO GODDAMN *EARN* IT.

ONE WEEK LATER...

THE LUCKY PEB

TAXI

...TALKS ARE SET TO RESUME TOMORROW MORNING.

TURNING NOW TO THE WORLD OF ENTERTAINMENT...

Delete Video?

...SOCIAL MEDIA SAID GOODBYE TO ONE OF ITS OWN TODAY AS FORMER INFLUENCER AND HEIRESS **KESHINI PEHECHAAN** WAS LAID TO REST.

MURRAY, TURN THAT UP.

7NEWS

PEHECHAAN, WHO HAD REMOVED HERSELF FROM PUBLIC LIFE IN RECENT YEARS, REPORTEDLY SUFFERED A FATAL SWIMMING INJURY WHILE VACATIONING AT A **PRIVATE RETREAT.**

YOU GOT HER ***HOME,*** BERGEN.

GOOD JOB.

IT ***DOES*** WARM THE HEART, DOESN'T IT?

MOIRAI?!

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU *DOING* HERE? HOW DID YOU--

SURE, LONG AS I'M NOT SUDDENLY BOOZING IT UP IN *ANCIENT ROME* OR SOMETHING.

YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO GO THERE. THEY *WATER DOWN* THE WINE.

SO, HAVE YOU HEARD FROM ANY OF THE *OTHERS*?

YEAH, WYNN GOT AHOLD OF ME. SHE WENT BACK AND *SAVED* HER SQUADRON. STILL LOST HER ARM, BUT EVERYONE LIVED.

CHARLES, I--

*CALM* YOURSELF, MISS LEVY. I JUST CAME IN FOR A DRINK.

MIND IF I JOIN YOU?

NOT SINCE THE RACE.

AND WHAT ABOUT YOU? WHAT ARE *YOUR* PLANS NOW?

BACK TO YOUR OVERLY ROMANTICIZED *GETAWAY* WAYS?

I CAN'T DO THAT ANYMORE. THAT WAS ALWAYS *KEITH'S* IDEA FOR ME, NOT MINE.

BESIDES, WHY MAKE PLANS WHEN QUELLEX MIGHT DECIDE TO DROP ME ON THE *TITANIC* AT ANY MINUTE?

YOU CERTAINLY MADE AN *IMPRESSION* ON HIM, DIDN'T YOU?

DON'T WORRY...

...I SUSPECT HE'S GOING TO BE BUSY WITH *OTHER* THINGS.

I ACQUIRED THIS DURING OUR TIME IN THE FUTURE. IT'S DESIGNED TO SEND A VERY SPECIAL *"HELLO"* TO QUELLEX.

AND IF MY CALCULATIONS ARE CORRECT, HE SHOULD BE RECEIVING IT...

"...ANY MOMENT NOW."

GOOD MORNING, CITIZEN QUELLEX! WE'VE RECEIVED NOTICE OF TWENTY-SEVEN DIRECT VIOLATIONS OF **CROSS-TEMPORAL PROHIBITION** STATUTES!

UNFORTUNATELY, OUR SCANS **HAVE** DETECTED FORBIDDEN TECHNOLOGY ON THE PREMISES. WE ARE THEREFORE ENACTING EXECUTIVE ORDER ONE.

**STOP! HOW DARE YOU?!**

**I DEMAND TO KNOW HOW--**

PLEASE STAND BY FOR **ERADICATION.**

YOU CAN STAND BY TO GO F--

--UUUUUAAWWPPP!

NNNFF!

WHA-- HOW--

MOIRAI.

**MOIRAI!**

HAH! OH MY GOD, THAT'S FANTASTIC!

I WISH I COULD SEE HIS FACE WHEN THAT HAPPENS!

I'M GLAD YOU APPROVE. UNFORTUNATELY, IT WON'T LAST.

QUELLEX IS TOO RESILIENT.

HE HAS CONTINGENCIES UPON CONTINGENCIES, AND IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HE'S TARGETING CONTESTANTS FOR THE NEXT RACE.

I AIM TO SHUT IT DOWN PERMANENTLY. TO MAKE SURE WHAT HAPPENED TO THE PEOPLE WE RACED AGAINST...

...WHAT HAPPENED TO JACK, THE FRIEND I TOLD YOU ABOUT...

...NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN.

IT'S WHY I'VE FORCED MY WAY INTO ALL THE RACES. ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY, TO INFORMATION, TO TIME ITSELF... WHATEVER TOOLS I COULD GET MY HANDS ON TO STOP HIM.

IT'S HOW I'VE MANAGED TO STAY ALIVE THIS LONG.

I'M CLOSE... SO CLOSE... BUT HE'S ALWAYS A STEP OR TWO AHEAD OF ME. SOMETHING'S MISSING.

I THINK THAT SOMETHING COULD BE YOU.

YOU WON THAT RACE, BUT YOU THREW IT TO SAVE JACKSON. THAT'S THE ONLY WAY ANY OF WHAT HAPPENED MAKES SENSE.

YOU READ THE SITUATION QUELLEX PUT IN FRONT OF YOU AND SWERVED IN A WAY HE NEVER SAW COMING.

I--I'M NOT DENYING THAT, BUT WHAT--

I NEED SOMEONE WHO CAN BLINDSIDE QUELLEX, BEAT HIM AT HIS OWN GAME. AND I SUSPECT YOU'RE IN NEED OF A PURPOSE RIGHT NOW.

I REALIZE I'M ASKING YOU MORE THAN I HAVE ANY RIGHT TO...

...BUT WILL YOU HELP ME?

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VIDEO DELETING

I'M IN.

BUT UNDERSTAND, I'M DONE FITTING INTO SOMEONE ELSE'S PLANS. IT'S NOT YOUR CAUSE, IT'S OURS.

WE'RE PARTNERS.

OF COURSE! ANYTHING YOU SAY.

NOW, I HAVE A PLACE WITH ALL THE EQUIPMENT I'VE GATHERED SO FAR. I'LL TAKE US--

THAT'S OKAY, MOIRAI...

...I'LL DRIVE.

THE END...

...Kind of.

# AFTERWORD

***As with everything beautiful in the world, it began with Dominic Toretto.***

*For more years than I care to remember, I've had a standing date with my friend Alyson to go see the newest* The Fast and the Furious *movie when it drops, to witness how far they've come from the halcyon days of stealing electronics out of semi trucks. I can't remember which sequel it was (well past hauling a bank vault through Rio de Janeiro, which, given how crazy the series has become, seems positively grounded now), but in the post-movie discussion, a question was posed: "What's next?" After a beat, I answered, "I don't know, dinosaurs?"*

*It was a joke, never intended for anything else. But for whatever reason, it stuck with me. And not just mixing cars and dinosaurs; that had been done in* Mark Schultz's Xenozoic Tales *(better known to Saturday morning enthusiasts as* Cadillacs and Dinosaurs*). No, my brain, infected with images of* Speed Racer *and* Cannonball Run *growing up, had the idea of running a race through prehistoric times. And, if you could do that, couldn't you run a race through any time period?*

*I loved the concept, but that's all it was—a big, fun idea with not much going on underneath. It took some time for the background processing to come up with a simple question: Why were they racing? Thinking about it, the danger they would face, the time-travel nature of it all, it finally hit me. It wasn't just the history of the setting in play, but the history of the characters. And what that history produced was something that could unify the drivers and allow the audience to identify with them: regret.*

*I'm embarrassed it took me so long to get there, but once I did, the floodgates burst open. Everyone has regrets of some kind, no matter who you are. Fortunately, for most of us, our regrets aren't over things causing irreparable destruction or death. But those people are out there. And if somebody came to them with an impossible offer, to risk their lives for the opportunity to undo the greatest mistake they ever made, wouldn't they jump at that chance?*

*With all of this in place, it was off to the races. (I know, I know . . .) After coming up with the title* Backtrack*, the book was picked up and set for a ten-issue run. I was put together with an amazing partner, Jake Elphick, and together we worked out looks for the characters, including a lead named in honor of my* Fast & Furious *movie buddy. The first issue dropped and got great reviews (thanks, Patton Oswalt!) and looked like it was going to be something that really struck a chord for readers. Then, naturally, the COVID pandemic hit, right around the release of the second issue, and whatever momentum had been created was stopped cold.*

*But now, four years later, we have a collection capturing the entire series in one place for the first time. I'm excited for new (and returning) readers to join Alyson and her fellow broken, damaged racers as they go back and forth across time attempting to correct their mistakes while slowly learning to live with them. It's like the book has the opportunity to be discovered and break out all over again.*

***And if there's one thing* Backtrack *is all about, it's second chances.***

***— Brian Joines***
***June 2024***

# THE PITCH

*A getaway driver enters a literal race against time to compete for the chance to change her past and correct the events that led her there.*

# THE STORY

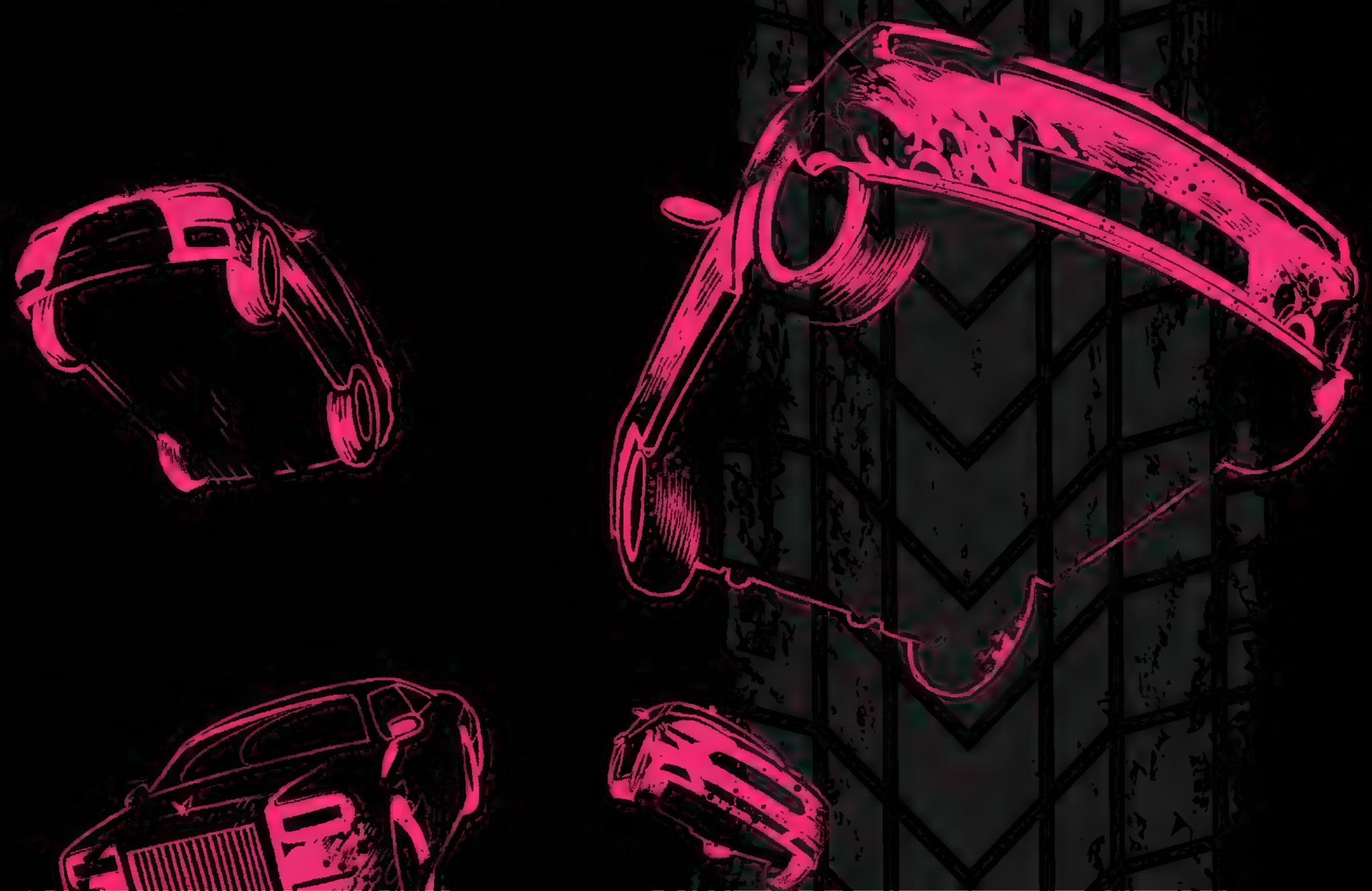
*Everyone makes mistakes . . . says the wrong thing, forgets an important fact, makes a bad decision. It's human nature. But when the mistakes we make are more damning . . . when lives are irreparably damaged and actions bring about real suffering . . . it haunts us. It's a flashing light forever in our rearview mirror. And if the opportunity to undo that damage presented itself, wouldn't you take it? No matter how high the risk?*

*Alyson Levy would. You wouldn't think so, given all she's encountered: born into a toxic family environment, a childhood spent in foster care and juvie, a life of honing her skills as a "wheelman" in the employ of shady criminal types. It made Levy hard, jaded. Only one thing was able to break through her defenses: her kid brother, Keith, who stood with her through everything before leaving the criminal lifestyle to pursue something "normal." But just as he was her strength, she was his weakness, and when a job came up a man short, Alyson lured him back in the game one final time. And final it was—Keith was killed.*

*Alyson was broken, shattered into pieces that would never fit together the right way again. That's when she started hearing about it . . . a contest, a competition, where the winner's granted the chance to correct a single mistake in their life. It was ridiculous, an impossible urban legend of false hopes. But Alyson's despair soon led her to Casper Quellex, an eccentric figure offering a chance to qualify for the contest, now revealed to be a massive cross-country car race. Easily gaining entry, Alyson soon found herself surrounded by various competitors, all seeking to change their past in one way or another. The drivers took their places, the light turned green . . .*

*Welcome to the Cretaceous period, Alyson Levy.*

*With an unnerving flash of light, the unbelievable truth behind the contest is laid bare. Having covertly outfitted the drivers' cars with special devices, Quellex has sent them on the most treacherous race of all, where each leg covers a different period in the planet's history. In addition to keeping the cars on the often-questionable roads and staying ahead of the competition, the drivers will have to contend with the world outside: barbarian hordes, dinosaurs, medieval warriors, natural disasters, even the far-flung future . . . it's all a possibility. Only the one who survives it all will be proven the winner . . . and to save Keith, Alyson will drive from the dawn of time to the death knell of the universe.*



***But it's not automatically her game. Alyson will face stiff competition from the other contestants, including:***

• **Charles Jackson** – *A street racer in his youth turned respectable businessman. Charles and his wife ignored early warning signs of their son's health, resulting in him dying of leukemia two years later.*

• **Keshini Pehechaan** – *A spoiled former heiress cut off from her wealth due to a falling out with her father. She's hired a chauffeur/bodyguard for this race. He goes by Bergen.*

• **Dale Taggart** – *An ex-NASCAR golden boy who let booze and drugs derail his career.*

• **Cao Huiqing** – *A thrill-seeking international rally driver claiming to be in competition solely to win. She admits to no tragedies in her past.*

• **Eron Abaroa** – *A detective on the Rio de Janeiro police force in the pocket of local crime bosses.*

• **Lemmon Moirai** – *A true enigma among the racers, having qualified for the race via hired proxy. What's known is this isn't his first race for Quellex, he's not a native to 2018, and he's looking beyond the promised redemption of the win. He wants Quellex's secrets . . . and Quellex has a LOT of secrets.*

*There will be others, in the peripheral view, falling victim to their surroundings early on as our main characters find themselves having to put aside rivalries to work together to survive what the race throws at them. Yet any partnership is destined to be limited, with racers ready to flip at a moment's notice if it means gaining an advantage, taking the lead. It's a cutthroat competition as everyone works toward erasing their greatest mistakes . . . while possibly committing new ones in the process.*

*And in the end, it all culminates in a final stretch with three competitors left: Jackson, wounded but having hired Bergen as driver after Pehechaan met a grisly fate; Moirai, willing to do whatever it takes to secure his own immortality via the secrets of Quellex's power; and Alyson, battered and scarred from the experience but still looking to secure the prize. But her experiences and interactions with the other drivers have shone a light on her own behavior as she realizes, like so many things she's done before, the race is only a way to numb the pain, not cure the condition. It's a realization that may have a monumental impact on the ultimate outcome, whether she wins the race or not.*

# IN CONCLUSION

Backtrack *is an adventure that combines elements from various sources . . . everything from* Fast and the Furious *to* Jurassic Park *to* Back to the Future *to* The Hunger Games *to, yes, even* Cannonball Run *. . . and uses them to weave a tale of the baggage we carry, the demons that drive us, and the lengths we'll go to in order to make things right. It's about those who get swallowed up by their grief and those who embrace the grace of letting go, all tied together in a story fueled by action, mystery, and characters' relationships with themselves and each other. It's ultimately a finite story, but one that can be stretched across infinity as it races toward the finish line.*

***Redemption is just waiting for the green light.***

# FROM SCRIPT TO PAGE

## PAGE 16

**PAGE 16, Panel One**
Splash page. From out of the jungle steps a tyrannosaurus rex, massive, huge, frightful as all hell. It bites down on Kakkar, closing its jagged teeth around the man at his hip area. The other drivers look at the event, their minds not even being able to process what they're seeing.

NO COPY

## PAGE 17

**PAGE 17, Panel One**
The T-Rex rears its head back, opening its mouth to take in the rest of Kakkar's body. Blood runs from the side of its mouth as the very ends of Kakkar's feet can be seen falling into the creature's maw.

NO COPY

**PAGE 17, Panel Two**
A number of racers look up at the off-panel creature, looks of fear and awe on their faces. WYNN DOMINA is in the panel's foreground, remaining still and quiet, while an disbelieving Jet scoffs behind her.

WYNN / quiet: Oh my god.

JET: Oh, PLEASE! You buying this?

JET: That dude was probably some kinda ACTOR…

**PAGE 17, Panel Three**
Focus on the T-Rex as it lets out a massive cry towards the off-panel racers, showing all its teeth in a violent display of dominance.

JET / from off: …And this is just some kinda THEME PARK bullshit to throw us off our--

SFX / T-Rex: MRRAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH

**PAGE 17, Panel Four**
Big panel as the T-Rex bellows its cry again, lumbering forward towards the various racers, who scramble in confusion to get to their cars (or onto their bike, in Jet's case) Kakkar's Humvee sits alone near the edge of the jungle, the only reminder he even existed.

SFX / T-Rex: MRRAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH

JET: AHH!!

**PAGE 17, Panel Five**
Chaos on the ground as two cars run into each other. Around the accident, people are still racing to their vehicles, including Bergen who is using his body to protect Keshini. As the T-Rex looms closer, Alyson is climbing back into her car.

NO COPY

**PAGE 17, Panel Six**
Tight on Alyson's rearview mirror. We see her looking into it as the T-Rex makes a beeline for her.

Alyson: Come on…

ALYSON: …COME ON!

## PAGE 18

**PAGE 18, Panel One**
Wide shot as Alyson drives her car through the clearing, the T-Rex approaching her from behind. On her driver's side, the car driven by the OLDER MAN, with the YOUNGER MAN in the passenger seat, starts to pull up next to Alyson. This is the scene from Page 1, from a more outside perspective.

ALYSON: GO, GODDAMMIT, GO!!

YOUNGER MAN: Hurry, it's COMING!!

OLDER MAN: I'm going as fast as I can!

**PAGE 18, Panel Two**
A lower angle shot as the T-Rex rips the younger man from the car, its crushing jaws sending a spray of blood flying from the man's body. The older man turns to look back at his grandson, taking his eyes off the road entirely.

YOUNGER MAN: AGGLLLRRKK--!!

OLDER MAN: DAVID!!!

**PAGE 18, Panel Three**
The older man's Jaguar SLAMS into a tree at the jungle's edge, sending bits of the car flying and seriously damaging the older man. In the background, we see the T-Rex finishing off the younger man, swallowing him in a similar fashion to him eating Kakkar.

NO COPY

**PAGE 18, Panel Four**
Tight shot of a frightened Alyson looking in her driver-side mirror. Behind her, we see the T-Rex starting in on the older man, looking like a large dog eating out of a banged up food dish. Her wipers are clearing the younger man's blood from her windshield.

NO COPY

**PAGE 18, Panel Five**
Long shot of the remaining cars driving through the clearing, thick jungle on each side. There are now ten vehicles visible (minus the Jaguar, the Humvee, and the helmeted man's car, which left upon arriving). Alyson's car is one of the lead cars at this point.

ALYSON / from car: Okay! Okay. THINK.

ALYSON / from car: Thinkthinkthinkthinkthink.

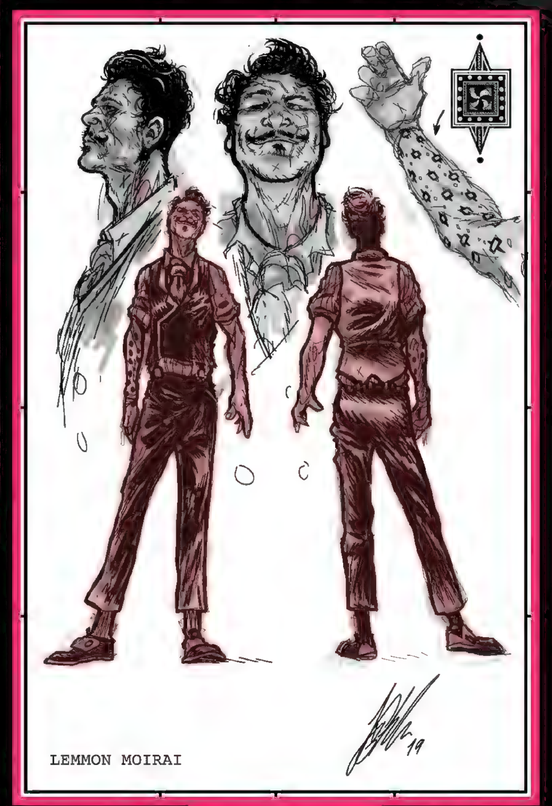
**PAGE 18, Panel Six**
Tight on Alyson behind the wheel, jumping suddenly as a very elaborate pale blue hologram flashes up on top of her dashboard. It looks to be a topographical map of sorts, with a large glowing pink dot located at a midway point in the map and a bright blue dot that seems to be slowly moving towards it.

ALYSON: There has to be some--

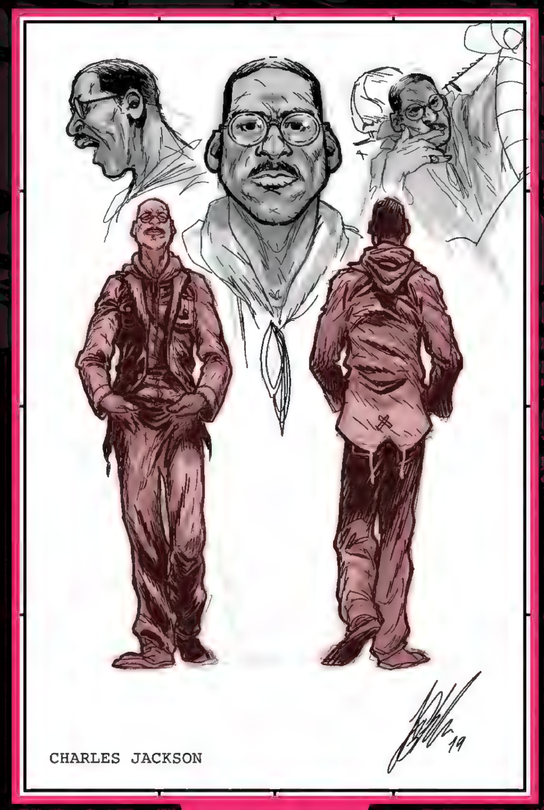
ALYSON: AH!!

# CHARACTER SKETCHES

ALYSON LEVY



LEMMON MOIRAI



CHARLES JACKSON

CASPER QUELLEX

# COVER GALLERY

**Cover artwork by Marco D'Alfonso**

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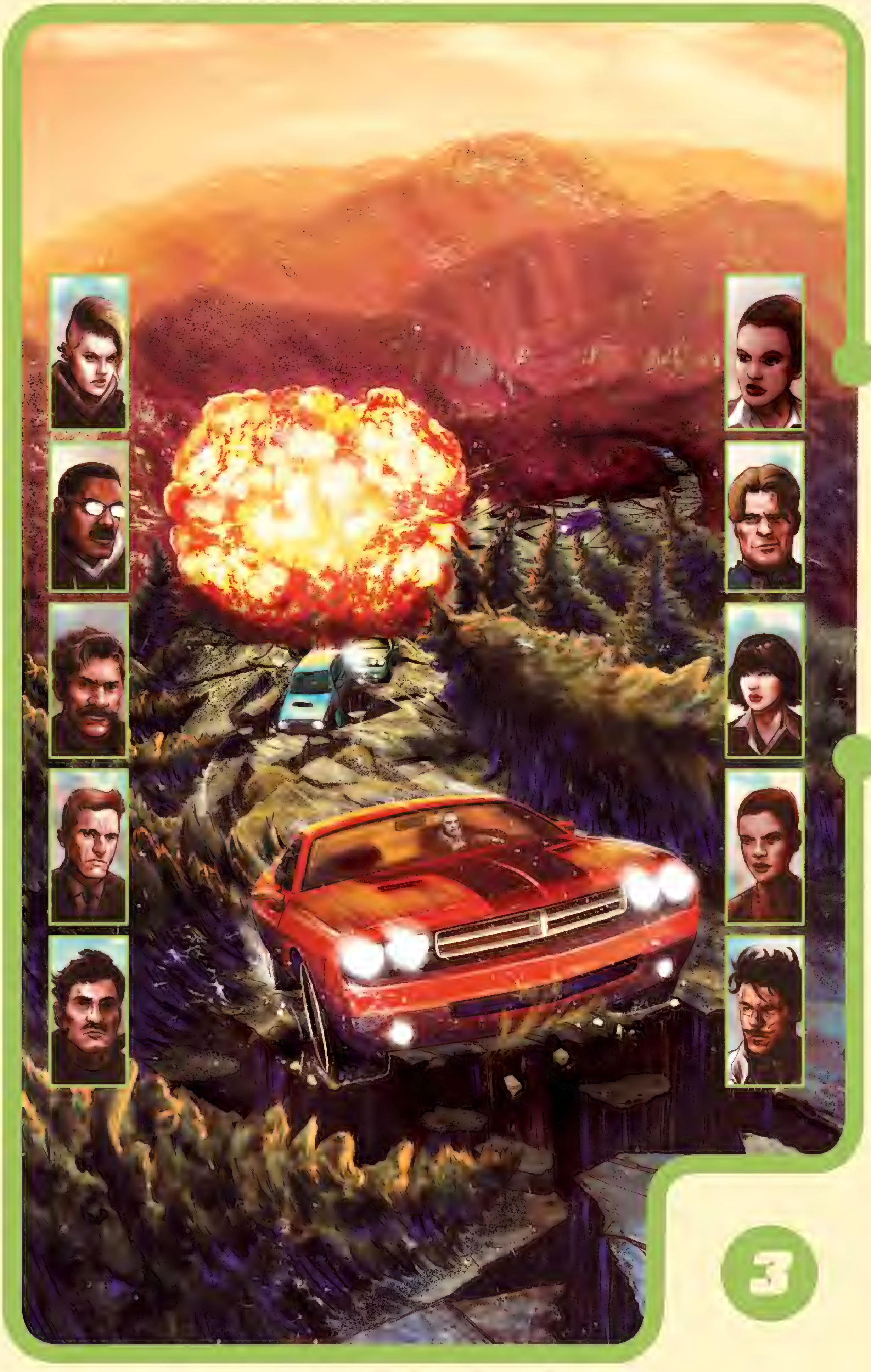


QUELLEX

# BACKTRACK

## DELUXE EDITION

### ULTIMATE PLAYLIST

**"I RULE THE RUINS"**
*BY WARLOCK*

**"OLD NUMBER SEVEN"**
*BY THE DEVIL MAKES THREE*

**"MISERY BUSINESS"**
*BY PARAMORE*

**"DON'T SPEAK (I CAME TO MAKE A BANG!)"**
*BY THE EAGLES OF DEATH METAL*

**"FEELS LIKE WE ONLY GO BACKWARDS"**
*BY TAME IMPALA*

**"RUN THROUGH THE JUNGLE"**
*BY CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL*

**"DESTINATION UNKNOWN"**
*BY MISSING PERSONS*

**"KILL V. MAIM"**
*BY GRIMES*

**"MY LITTLE TOWN"**
*BY SIMON & GARFUNKEL*

**"GYPSY ROAD"**
*BY CINDERELLA*

**"MOUNTAIN AT MY GATES"**
*BY FOAL*

**"A THOUSAND MILES FROM NOWHERE"**
*BY DWIGHT YOAKAM*

**"COLD COLD COLD"**
*BY CAGE THE ELEPHANT*

**"THIS AIN'T A SCENE, IT'S AN ARMS RACE"**
*BY FALL OUT BOY*

**"FEET DON'T FAIL ME"**
*BY QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE*

**"NO ROOTS"**
*BY ALICE MERTON*

**"KING MIDAS IN REVERSE"**
*BY THE HOLLIES*

**"TUSK"**
*BY FLEETWOOD MAC*

**"OCEAN DRIVE"**
*BY DUKE DUMONT*

**"HELP"**
*BY JOE HERTLER & THE RAINBOW SEEKERS*

**"TERRIBLE THING"**
*BY AG*

**"STANDING IN THE WAY OF CONTROL"**
*BY GOSSIP*

**"THE NEVER-ENDING WHY"**
*BY PLACEBO*

**"ON THE LOOSE"**
*BY SAGA*

**"RIDE LIKE THE WIND"**
*BY SAXON*

**"LAST ONE TO DIE"**
*BY RANCID*

**"LOVE TO HATE YOU"**
*BY ERASURE*

**"FIND YOUR WAY BACK"**
*BY JEFFERSON STARSHIP*

**"I'M COMING HOME"**
*BY Y&T*

**"DRIVE"**
*BY INCUBUS*

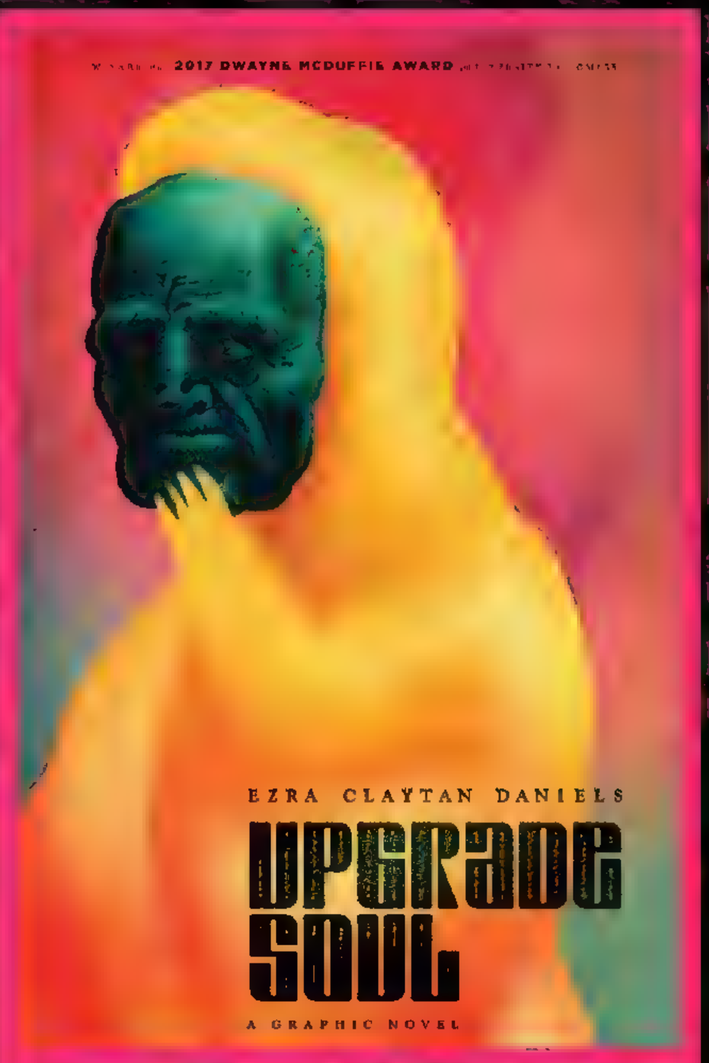
# ALSO FROM ONI PRESS

## Issunboshi: A Graphic Novel

*Ryan Lang*

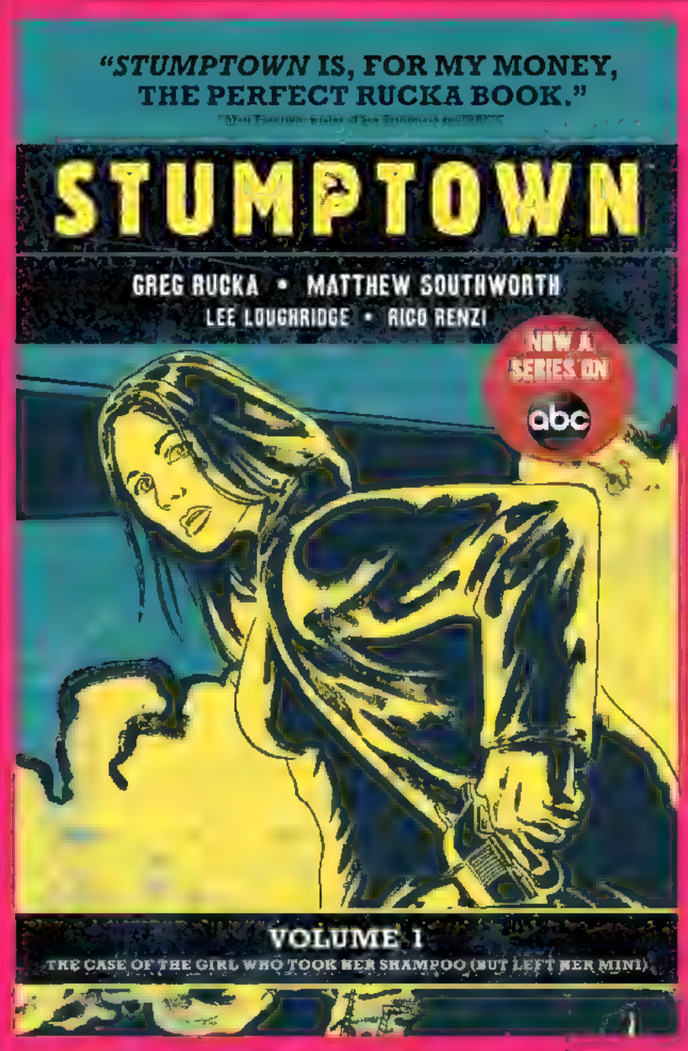
## Area 510

*Jay Faerber and Justin Greenwood*




## Upgrade Soul

*Ezra Claytan Daniels*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## Xino

*Melissa Flores, Phil Hester, David Lapham, and many more!*

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# PIT CREW

Photo by Alyson Levy (told you she was real)

Photo courtesy of Jake Elphick

Photo courtesy of Doug Garbark

Photo courtesy of Jim Campbell

## BRIAN JOINES

*is the critically acclaimed writer of* Krampus! A Yuletide Adventure *for Oni Press,* I.M.A.G.I.N.E. Agents *and the* Bill & Ted *titles for Boom! Studios, and* Secret Identities *for Image Comics. He currently resides in Portland, Oregon, alongside 83 percent of the comic book industry.*

## JAKE ELPHICK

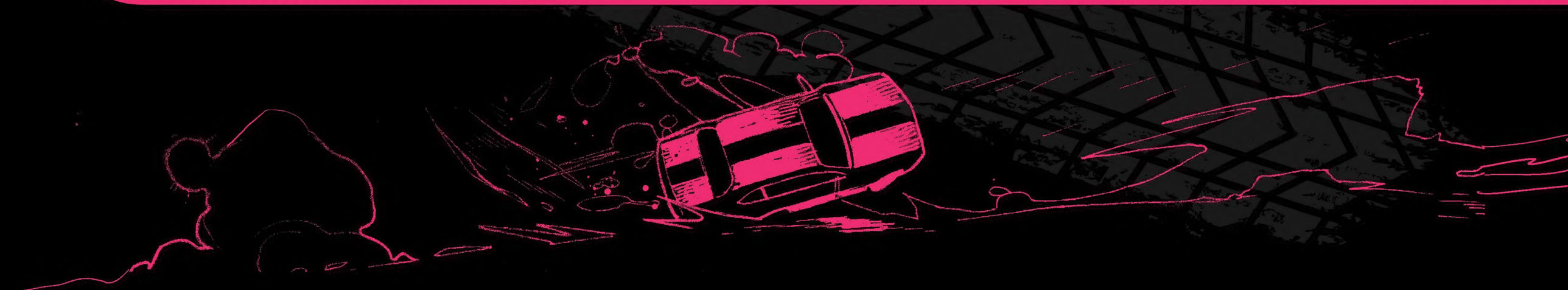
*is a comic and story artist from London, UK. His other notable works include* SuperMansion *(Titan Comics),* WWE *(BOOM! Studios), and* Cyberpunk 2077: Kickdown *(Dark Horse).*

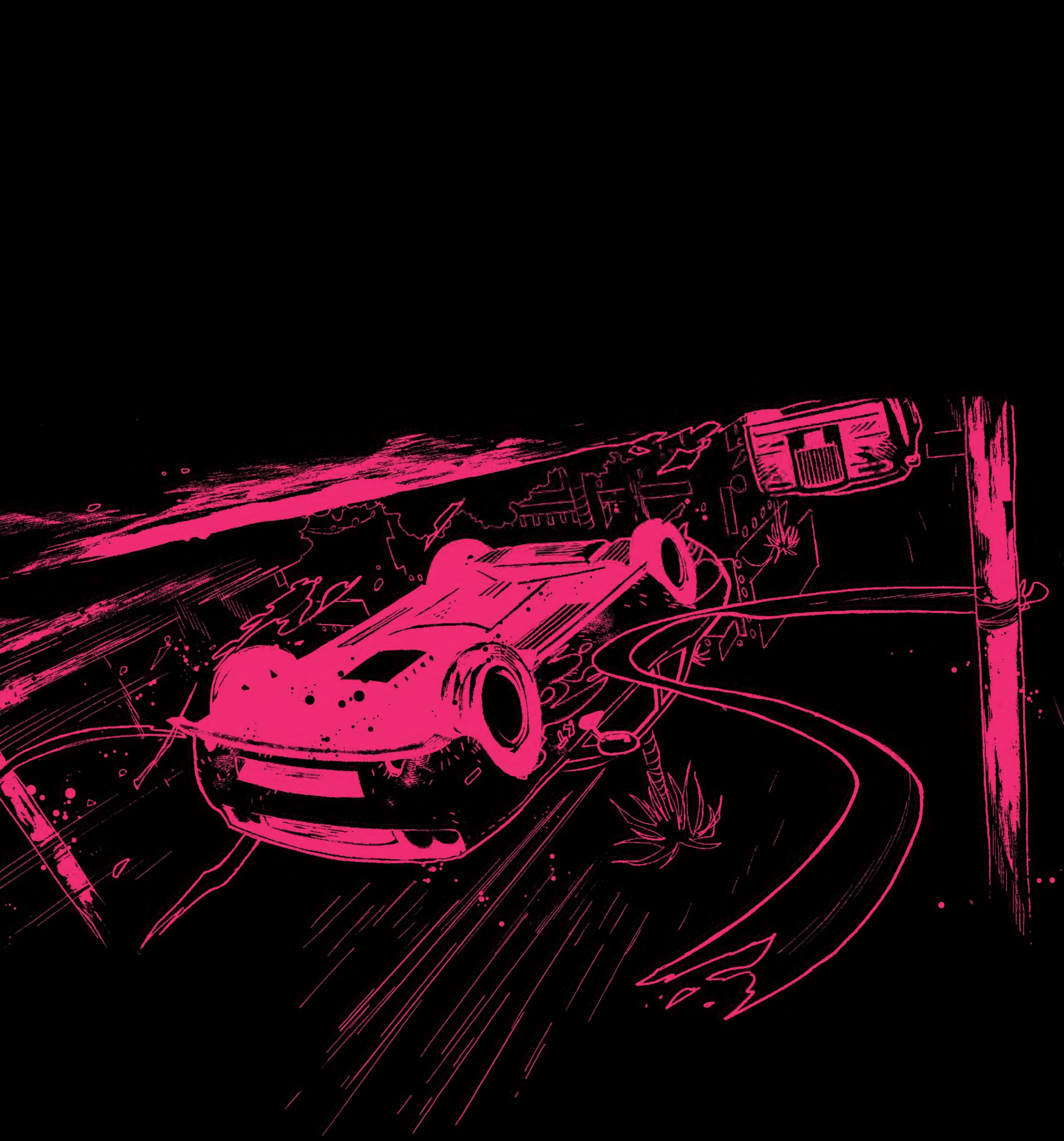
## DOUG GARBARK

*is a comic book colorist based out of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Some of his most notable works include* DC Bombshells, Green Lantern/ Star Trek, *and* SFX *for DC Comics.* Mountainhead *for IDW.* Backtrack *and* Rick & Morty *for Oni Press.* WWE, Warlords of Appalachia, the Last Sons of America, Robocop, Hitman Agent 47, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, *and* Firefly *for Boom Studios. You can reach Doug at douggarbark@live.com or on X/Twitter @DougGarbark and Facebook Doug Garbark Colors.*

## JIM CAMPBELL

*is one of the comics industry's busiest letterers, whose currently work appears in UK anthology* 2000 A.D. *every week and in many fine books from BOOM Studios, Dark Horse, Image, Mad Cave, Oni, Titan, Vault, and more. He lives, works, and very occasionally sleeps in a small English market town with a nice pub at the end of the road.*





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***The Fast and the Furious* meets *Back to the Future* in this high-stakes car race through history from writer Brian Joines (*Krampus!*, *IMAGINE Agents*) and artist Jake Elphick (*WWE: NXT Takeover*), now collected in a deluxe hardcover edition.**

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